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### Small School Leadership: A Q Method Study of Elements of Leadership Specific to a Small School Setting

Charis Eirene Sharp

*Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change*

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SMALL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: A Q METHOD STUDY OF ELEMENTS OF  
LEADERSHIP SPECIFIC TO A SMALL SCHOOL SETTING

CHARIS EIRENE SHARP

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the PhD in Leadership & Change Program  
of Antioch University  
in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

SMALL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: A Q METHOD STUDY OF ELEMENTS OF  
LEADERSHIP SPECIFIC TO A SMALL SCHOOL SETTING

prepared by

Charis Eirene Sharp

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Change.

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## ABSTRACT

Smaller schools have become an extremely popular school reform model. Research that connects them to student achievement is being used to support and create autonomous small schools as well as schools-within-schools. While it would seem to be a logical application, the schools-within-schools model is not performing at the levels expected as indicated by the small schools research. Research on these two different school settings needs to be separated, examined, and applied independently. Areas lacking research include questions about which aspects of schools support the functioning of the school, such as leadership. This study used Q-methodology to study leadership in a small private school in Seattle, Washington. The school has 84 students and ranks at high levels on several scales of leadership and climate that have been correlated to high levels of student achievement. Q-method quantifies the opinions of study participants in such a way as to find groups of similar responses represented by factors. This study found an unusually high degree of consensus among the participants of the study and that there were no clear distinctions between the perspectives of the groups. The resulting single factor in this study is characterized by identifying the actions and leadership of the teachers as being most important to smaller school leadership. Also, student leadership and making leadership a part of the whole school program was given a high degree of importance. Leadership by the head of school and leadership actions of the parents were rated lower, respectively, in terms of importance for an effective smaller school. The electronic version of this dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center, [www.ohiolink.edu/etd](http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd).

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### *Situating the Researcher*

I work for a very small school and consequently have developed a deep appreciation for the power of these unique, intimate communities to promote exceptional teaching and learning. This in turn, has sparked my curiosity about exactly how and why these schools are able to support teaching and learning as well as they do. Small schools as a whole are showing marked advancements in many indicators of effective education, such as greater student achievement, decreased dropout rates, and higher teacher morale (Raywid, 1999; Wasley, Fine, King, Powell, Holland, Gladden, & Mosak, 2000; Wasley & Lear, 2001). A direct consequence of these advancements is that small schools are receiving more and more attention, and influential political and educational organizations are beginning to champion their cause. Large, comprehensive schools, once thought to be the most effective educational environments, along with educational foundations and organizations, districts, and federal, state, and local education offices are now trying to figure out how they, too, can realize the benefits of smaller schools and learning communities.

All of this attention has essentially turned small schools into models of reform for larger institutions, an ironic turn of events that poses a serious threat to their unique advantages. The reform effort has focused more on creating small schools and learning communities within already existing larger schools than on creating small, autonomous schools. Howley (2004) notes, “Research on actually smaller schools has been cited by urban and suburban reformers who have developed a strategy known as ‘schools-within-schools’ in the attempt to personalize huge schools” (p. 2). While some of these projects are showing good results, the overall

impressions are that they are not performing as well as expected. Initial expectations, based on small school research conducted in autonomous small school settings, are proving more difficult to attain in the schools-within-schools system than was hoped (Shaw, 2006). The danger now is that the use of research from one setting (small schools) to support the development of another (schools-within-schools) will create a backlash, and the disappointments of larger schools' efforts will affect the ability of truly autonomous small schools to survive and continue to advance.

My passion is not for exploring and developing schools-within-a-school. My passion is for researching and providing small schools the information necessary to support them in creating exceptional educational experiences for students. As a student of leadership, I have found that there is a great deal of research into areas of educational leadership, from teacher leaders to principals and heads of schools to administrators and superintendents. However, I have also learned that there is very little study, especially peer-reviewed study, that focuses specifically on what leadership looks like and how it performs in smaller schools. This is troublesome; in the same way that small school research has been applied inappropriately to schools-within-a-school, traditional leadership practices could easily be misapplied to smaller school settings with damaging results. Good leaders of large schools could be erroneously assumed to be good leaders of small schools. Leadership practices, methods, traits, and styles that are currently considered to be good and effective in general could prove, in smaller school settings, to be inadequate. Likewise, aspects of good leadership considered secondary in larger organizations could be found to be crucial to leading smaller organizations.

My own experience, along with research and opinions I have studied, leads me to believe that small school leadership requires a more specialized approach than standard educational leadership. The studies discussed in the literature review seem to indicate the necessity for heavily shared or distributed leadership in a small school setting. While teacher leadership has long been part of the school education discussion, the idea that everyone should share in the leadership of the school is not common. Also, what shared leadership means for small schools has not yet been clearly articulated. Carefully defining good small school leadership, including those leadership roles specific to different constituent groups such as faculty, parents, and students, might provide a countermeasure to the tendency to simply apply standard leadership practices. Ultimately, a clear definition of what good leadership is at the small school level may assist smaller schools to operate more effectively. It is my hope that this study will initiate this process.

It is important as well to disclose here my relationship to the proposed subject school for this study. The school is Billings Middle School, a small, private, independent middle school in Seattle, Washington. For three years I was the director of community development at Billings. This position entailed fundraising, marketing, and other duties connected with our larger community. I recently resigned the position in order to focus on this dissertation, but I continue to chair the curriculum committee, attend board of trustee meetings, and assist with development and marketing projects as needed. My relationship to the school is an advantage in that I have a solid working relationship with faculty, staff, parents, students, and board members. They know my work and trust me with their opinions. In addition, I am deeply familiar with the school culture and can add context to the data that would not be available otherwise.

### *Purpose of the Study*

In order to understand, and put in context, the current climate of small school research, it is important to examine the history of small schools and to gain insight into the development of what has become a very popular school reform movement. Early in the development of the public school system, smaller schools were the norm. However, in the middle of the last century they fell into disfavor. In an overview of the history of school sizes, Hampel (2002) states that until the 1970s, “the small school was seen as the problem, not the solution” (p. 357). In the interest of progress, educational leaders attempted to solve this perceived problem. Hampel found that in “1940 there were 114,000 one-room schools . . . 60,000 in 1950,” and finally, that by 1970, “the one-room school house had almost vanished” (Hampel, 2002, p. 358). Sizes of schools, particularly urban high schools, increased during this period. With only 25% of U.S. high schools serving more than 200 students before World War II, “fifty years later, 53% of American schools were in the 500-2,500 student range” (Hampel, 2002, p. 358).

Larger schools were seen as better because they could more easily track students according to ability, include rooms specialized to particular subject areas, provide extra-curricular offerings, attract better administrators and teachers, and reflect more cosmopolitan values (Hampel, 2002). The assumption was that these reforms would, of course, lead to better learning. Yet, almost forty years later, the assumption seems to no longer be in favor, as educators shift towards a position from which they dedicate nearly one billion dollars nationally to creating smaller learning communities.

In a review of recent research on small schools, Cotton (2001) found that “research conducted in the past 15 years has convincingly demonstrated that small schools are superior to

large ones on many measures and equal to them on the rest” (p. 1). In another review of current literature, Raywid (1999) reported that large quantitative studies in the 1980s and 90s established small schools as beneficial.

These studies, involving large numbers of students, schools and districts, confirmed that students learn more and better in small schools (Lee & Smith, 1995). Students make more rapid progress toward graduation (McMullan, Snipe, & Wolf, 1994). They are more satisfied with small schools and fewer of them drop out than from larger schools (Pittman & Haughwout, 1987). Students behave better in smaller schools, which thus experience fewer instances of both minor and serious infractions (Stockard & Mayberry, 1992). All of this is particularly true for disadvantaged students, who perform far differently in small schools and appear more dependent on them for success than do more fortunate youngsters (Lee & Smith, 1995). All of these things we have confirmed with a clarity and at a level of confidence rare in the annals of education research. (Raywid, 1999, p. 2)

Such statements are prevalent throughout the small school literature. The promising results for disadvantaged students have been of particular focus for many interested in smaller schools.

These results, along with the push for school reform, particularly in large urban schools where more disadvantaged students tend to be struggling in schools, have sparked a movement to turn existing large, comprehensive schools into collections of smaller learning communities often referred to as schools-within-a-school or SWAS. SWAS projects have been conducted in New York, Seattle, Chicago, Los Angeles, and several other large urban centers, with the assumption that they should perform at the same level indicated by small school research. Yet their ability, or lack of ability, actually to perform at that same level has caused recent concern amongst small school researchers and practitioners. Wallach (2002) notes that, “most research is based on free-standing small schools, not those sharing the same traditional large school space or those which were born from one comprehensive school” (p. 2). As many SWAS projects began, there was a lack of research specific to their own models, causing SWAS projects to rely heavily on research

of small, fully autonomous schools. Appropriate research on SWAS simply was not available, and while autonomous small school research has been a vital tool in swaying public opinion regarding the considerable resources dedicated to creating SWAS, the findings do not seem to be as transferable as implied. In fact, the record of success for SWAS grouping efforts is not as good as it is in small schools (Raywid, Schmerler, Phillips, & Smith, 2003). Nevertheless, the SWAS movement is pervasive.

The major efforts of school reformers to create urban small schools began in the early- to mid-1990s, and the research on SWAS started appearing in published form in the late 1990s, with the majority published in the last three to five years. These published documents are primarily reports produced by the projects themselves, by outside research organizations contracted by the projects, or by coalitions of multiple organizations such as universities and school reform think tanks. Several new papers have been presented at conferences in recent years, and a few published studies do exist that examine general leadership or include comparisons to large schools, but what stands out is a lack of dedicated research focused on small school leadership appearing in peer-reviewed publications.

Empirical literature is so lacking that some of the best information currently available can be found in opinion pieces on leading small schools. One head of a small private school wrote about his experiences in learning to lead small schools through the mentorship of another head of school (Votey, 2002). His lessons included focusing on what's best for students, clearly communicating the vision for the school, and spending at least 60 percent of his time on internal school matters. In another piece, Copland and Boatright (2004), discussing lessons for leaders of large-to-small high school transformations, reference the reflections of a public school principal:

Pondering the question of leadership, Gering notes, “We’ve changed our view of teacher leadership and administration. Small schools just take more leaders than large schools, and more people to step up and provide the knowledge and skills we need at any particular moment. You’ve heard how it’s important to have teachers as generalists in small schools. Well, we also need leaders as generalists.” (p. 762)

While these two examples are not based on empirical research, they are based, like the findings on small school research from SWAS projects, on real-life learning. Which is not to say that the data is less valid; it simply makes the lack of focused research on leadership that much more pronounced.

The little that has been published on small school leadership has appeared primarily in SWAS case studies and evaluations. In fact, the vast majority of research about small school leadership being generated at this time comes from these sources. It seems that the field is simply too young to have generated ample research-targeting questions regarding SWAS or smaller school leadership, resulting in the majority of research on small schools being focused almost entirely on indicators of student achievement. That is not to say that leadership doesn’t surface in the research. In fact, it’s interesting to note that when examined carefully the data actually does provide insight into leadership in a number of ways. As the literature review will show, lessons on leadership have been culled from the experiences and reflections not just of the principals of the schools, but of the teachers and students as well. Hopefully, as small schools and SWAS are further examined, the unique aspects of small school leadership will become the topic of more focused investigations.

So often leadership studies seem to focus, logically enough, on those at the top of the organization. For instance, a widely-used instrument for studying leadership in both organizations and in education, the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5x) (Avolio &

Bass, 2004), comprises a survey administered to the leader and a separate survey administered to those being led. The first asks the responder to reflect on his or her leadership while the second asks the responders to reflect on their perceptions of the leader. This is just one of many such instruments and, consequently, most educational leadership studies have focused on those at the top of the organizations, without reflecting on the roles of others within the system. In educational research this translates to a focus on principals, superintendents, and other administrators.

In contrast, studies on small schools and experiences of small school educators have found that the smaller the school, the more the responsibilities of leadership need to be dispersed (Copland & Boatright, 2004; Wasley et al., 2000). This research indicates that surveys keyed to a central person may be an inadequate tool for studying leadership in smaller organizations, and hints at an entirely different idea of what good leadership might be, especially in a small school. However, simply distributing leadership responsibilities among the faculty may be too simplistic a take on what effective smaller school leadership entails.

The purpose of this study is to begin to develop an understanding of what is specific about good small school leadership. It will look at leadership from the perspectives of the whole school community including staff and faculty, students and families, as well as the head of school or principal. It will begin to create a model of good small school leadership that might help small schools continue to develop as one of the most effective ways of meeting the educational needs of students.

It will be important to look at what is considered to be good school leadership so that it can be differentiated from the findings about small school leadership. While leadership of and in

schools is an extremely broad subject, there is some consensus about what makes for good educational leadership today. In general, this study embraces the idea that all members of a school community should be learners, not just the students. It also puts much of the responsibility for the performance and improvement of a school in the hands of the teachers in addition to the principal or head of school. It will also be important to enable participants to think beyond their reflexive answers to “what is good leadership” and explore what good leadership is in specific reference to the small school and how that might be different from large schools.

### *Research Question*

This study seeks to identify key characteristics of leadership specific to small schools. It does not seek to simply reiterate or reinvent what good leadership looks like in general. Thus the question under investigation is based on the assumption that small school leadership is different from large school leadership. The question of this study, then, is, “What are the characteristics of leadership specific to an effective smaller school, as identified by leaders, staff, faculty, students, parents, and board members?”

### *Description of Terms*

#### *Small Schools and Smaller Schools*

Throughout the literature, the definition of *small school* varies considerably and reviews of research offer student population levels ranging anywhere from 100 to 1,000. In the literature review chapter for this study, several of these designations are included so as to offer a broad overview of the conversation and data. The methods chapter will set forth a specific size for purposes of selection of subjects. This section offers a more philosophical description of *small* and *smaller*.

Because the definition of small varies in the literature, researchers such as Howley (2004) prefer the term smaller. He states, “*Smaller schools* is the term the present author and colleagues prefer, precisely because it represents a relative concept related to the variability of school size as it actually appears . . . Smallness is not a particular enrollment or a particular enrollment category” (Howley, 2004, pp. 2-3). A more fluid perspective of smaller versus larger, instead of various sizes of small, allows data to be understood in trends instead of in various small school categories, e.g. “SES [socioeconomic status] explains less of the variance in school achievement among smaller schools than it does among larger schools” (Coladarci, 2006, p. 3). The term smaller makes more sense for two reasons. First, one can compare data more easily across several studies and identify trends in variations of school size. Second, schools are not subject to categorization as small or not small, and therefore avoid the labels of good or not good.

Another definition of small that complements this perspective is an operational one.

It helps if schools are of a reasonable size, small enough for faculty members to sit around a table and iron things out, for everyone to be known well by everyone else, and for schools and families to collaborate face-to-face over time. They should be small enough so that children belong to the same community as the adults, not abandoned in adultless subcultures; small enough to both feel safe and be safe; small enough so that phony data can easily be detected by any interested participant; small enough so that the people most involved can never say they were not consulted . . . (Meier, 1997, p. 198)

This definition is particularly useful in the context of this study due to the fact that it speaks to leadership specific to smaller school environments. This study operates under these definitions and uses the term smaller rather than small as appropriate. Smaller schools can also be differentiated by the term *naturally* small schools as coined by Swidler (2004), in that naturally small schools are autonomous schools, separate both geographically and administratively from other schools as opposed to the now very popular model of schools within schools.

### *Schools Within Schools*

Howley (2004) defines *schools within schools* as

Administrative simulations of smaller size that amount to a family of grouping arrangements within existing mega-school schools, whose culture and administration remain dominant. They are called “schools,” but have lacked the autonomy and operational distinctiveness inherent in actual schools (Meier, 1995; Raywid & Schmerler, 2003). (p. 3)

These schools have become extremely popular. “The story of the effort to downsize our schools—to create small schools and schools-within-schools and small learning communities—is remarkable. In approximately the last dozen years, this idea has become one of the most favored of school reform strategies” (Raywid et al., 2003, p. vii). As previously stated, the impetus for the SWAS movement is the extremely promising data regarding student gains from research on naturally small schools. McCluskey (2002) notes that, “In fact, the efficacy of small schools has begun to become so clear that The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has dedicated more than \$345 million to help create more small schools across the country” (p. 4). That figure has increased considerably since the 2004 report and several other major supporters have joined The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. “Major foundations have targeted smaller schools for an unprecedented infusion of money. The federal government and many states, as well as dozens of large municipalities, have declared their core support for the development of ‘small learning communities’” (Raywid et al., 2003, p. ix). Funding for these efforts is significant, and major programs are in progress in New York City, Chicago, and in many other urban centers.

Typically, a large high school redesigns itself into smaller groupings, as the definition above indicates, with differing degrees of autonomy from their larger hosts depending on the adopted design. The resulting small schools range from being completely autonomous, sharing

no programs, personnel, or students, to being simply departments of the larger school, sharing administration, teachers, students, extra- and co-curricular programs, etc.

This study will focus on naturally smaller schools and not on SWAS. However, it is important to include them here because the lessons from these projects speak to the subject at hand. Findings from studies on SWAS can contribute significantly in a variety of ways to the discussion of naturally small schools. The effects that SWAS are having on these conversations should not be overlooked because SWAS are dominating the educational landscape in terms of attention, resulting in their limited success starting to color the perception of small schools in general. For this reason, it is important to both focus on what works in small schools and why, as well as to recognize the effects SWAS projects are having on current reform efforts.

### *Transformational Leadership*

“The term *transformational leadership* was first coined by Downton (1973); however, its emergence as an important approach to leadership began with a classic work by the political sociologist James McGregor Burns titled *Leadership* (1978)” (Northouse, 2001, p. 132). It is a model of leadership that has grown rapidly in popularity in both business and educational applications. Burns’ publication ignited several scholars who further developed his ideas into more complex models (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Rost, 1991; Tichy & Devanna, 1990). In general, transformational leadership focuses on the relationship between leader and follower and the actions of the leader to engage, inspire, and teach followers. According to Bass and Avolio’s (1994) most popular model, the highest level of Transformational Leadership involves inspiring, challenging, and providing learning for followers in order to better themselves in order to better the work of the organization. The next level down, transactional leadership, involves trading as

the main source of motivation or coercion, e.g. work for pay. The lowest level, laissez-faire leadership, is the absence of action on the part of the leader. The Transformational Leadership model is primarily concerned with the actions and behaviors of the leader.

### *Learning Organizations*

The concept of *learning organizations* has grown in popularity alongside Transformational Leadership and shares many overlapping qualities with it. However, the focus of learning organizations is on the organizational culture and capacity to learn and work together rather than on the leader's particular behaviors. Popularized by Senge (1990), learning organizations have been further developed by multiple scholars and practitioners in several fields (Kotter, 1996; T. J. Sergiovanni, 1995; Vaill, 1996). As of this writing, a quick search for book titles that contain the term returns 50 or more references. Generally, a learning organization is one in which there is a culture of learning, a shared vision, a shared understanding of the current structure, and a continual questioning of and reflection on practice.

### *Professional Learning Communities*

*Professional learning communities* (Dufour & Eaker, 1998) are similar to learning organizations in that they are focused on a culture of learning for all members. As a model, it is specific to the field of education and focuses on the professional development of faculty and the shared work of school reform and improvement. It has become a popular model in education reform and improvement and is well researched. "Rarely has research given school practitioners such a consistent message [regarding the positive effects of professional learning communities]" (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. 25).

### *Leadership Capacity*

*Leadership capacity* (Lambert, 2003) is a model of school leadership that includes the participation of the entire school community in helping schools learn about, reflect on, and improve instructional practice. It is different from professional learning communities in that it includes the participation of students and parents in the leadership of the school and expands areas of influence beyond instruction to other areas of school leadership.

### *Summary of Chapters*

The chapters that follow, the Literature Review and the Description of Method, seek to lay a foundation for the need for this study as well as for the method chosen. The literature review will also examine current models of leadership that embrace a post-industrial, process-based model of leadership that involves the learning and development of organization members. These leadership models are highlighted not only because they represent the basis for contemporary thinking of both scholars and practitioners on effective leadership, but also because they form the foundation for contemporary thinking by practitioners and scholars of school leadership. The literature review then examines professional learning communities and leadership capacity, models that embrace concepts complementary to Transformational Leadership and learning organizations. From there it will review specific studies that have shed light on leadership in small schools and connect the findings to the previously reviewed leadership models. The Description of Method will explain Q-methodology, a quantitative method that quantifies subjectivity by correlating how participants rank the importance of certain statements on leadership. It is particularly appropriate to the study of small schools in that it relies on the opinions and thinking of the participants, but does not rely on high numbers of

respondents in order to achieve statistical significance. This chapter will also describe the proposed school and participants and the protocol. Finally, it will summarize the argument for the topic, question and method of this proposed study.

## Chapter II: Review of the Literature

### *Current Thinking About Leadership*

One of today's most popular leadership thinkers, Senge (1990) states, "our traditional views of leaders—as special people who set the direction, make the key decisions, and energize the troops—are deeply rooted in an individualistic and non-systemic worldview" (p. 340). As organizations are striving to be more responsive and adaptable to the rapid changes they experience, concepts of leadership are shifting away from those that are based on the individual to those that are more inclusive of the organization as a whole. Northouse (2001) explains that many scholars and practitioners of leadership now view it more as a process than a collection of traits (pp. 4-5). This process is particularly important to organizations that must adapt to changes in their environment and where the success of the organization relies on the performance of all members. Given the demands of *No Child Left Behind* and high-stakes testing, schools in the United States are deeply familiar with the challenge of rapid change. This study is founded on two models which embrace leadership as a process: Transformational Leadership, which speaks specifically to the leader's actions in creating a culture of learning, and learning organizations, which speaks to the organizational interactions that occur around learning. These models are intentionally examined in this discussion because they speak directly to what has previously been largely the province of education, teaching, and learning, namely, the process of teaching and learning.

Rost (1991) states, "Confusing leadership and management and treating the words as if they were synonymous have a long and illustrious history in leadership studies" (p. 129). In more recent work, several scholars have begun their definitions of leadership by differentiating it from

management (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Gardner, 1990; Kotter, 1999; Northouse, 2001; Rost, 1991; Vaill, 1989). Leadership and management are, of course, strongly linked. Northouse (2001) states, "Leadership is a process that is similar to management in many ways. Leadership involves influence, as does management. Leadership requires influences with people, which management requires as well. Leadership is concerned with effective goal accomplishment and so is management" (p. 8). However, teasing out the differences between leadership and management is useful in examining leadership as a process because it defines and sets aside management tasks and actions that are often defined as part of leadership.

Gardner (1990) defines management as a collection of tasks, such as planning, decision making, building the institution, coordinating, exercising judgment, and so forth (pp. 15-16). Kotter (2000) states, "leadership sets direction, often a new direction, for a firm; clarifies the vision; gets people to share the vision and line up in the right directions; and motivates them to want to make the vision happen despite sacrifices and difficulties" (p. 7). Leadership is defined as including elements of management such as those listed by Gardner, but also as the process of interaction and the building of relationships within the organization. "The consensus that leadership is [only] good management has, to some degree, broken down" (Rost, 1991, p. 90).

One extremely popular leadership model that extends the idea of leadership as process is Transformational Leadership. One of the first to develop the concept, Burns (1978) defines a transformational leader as one who "recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower... [and] looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower" (p. 4). He differentiates this from transactional leadership, which seeks to influence through an exchange such as the exchange of work for pay.

There are two key differences between this way of thinking about leadership and those that came before it. One is the focus on the relationship between leaders and follower. The process of leadership is a result of what goes on between the leader and follower, not just what leaders and followers do. Another is the change in what is believed to motivate followers. Instead of followers doing what they are told based upon various external forces, both leader and follower recognize and leverage internal motivations. Burns (1978) contrasts this with power leadership, which “objectifies its victims; it literally turns them into objects,” whereas Transformational Leadership, at the other extreme, can be “so sensitive to the motives of potential followers that the roles of leader and follower become virtually interdependent” (p. 21). His work signaled a significant change in thinking about leadership up to that point and his ideas were significantly expanded by other scholars such as Rost (1991) and Bass and Avolio (1994) who followed.

Rost examined Burns’ definition of Transformational Leadership and used it to develop his own. He defines leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (Rost, 1991, p. 102). This definition includes four elements, all of which, according to Rost (1991), must be present in order for leadership to occur:

1. The relationship is based on influence.
2. Leaders and followers are the people in this relationship.
3. Leaders and followers intend real changes.
4. Leaders and followers develop mutual purpose. (p. 104)

In this definition is the recurrence Burns' concepts of leadership as a function of the leader-follower relationship and of mutual purpose as the tie that binds them. Rost wrote this at a time when, as he puts it, leadership studies were on the brink of moving from an industrial paradigm to a post-industrial paradigm and, consequently, the definition(s) of leadership were undergoing considerable change. Not long after, other scholars created new definitions and models of leadership. Like Rost, Bass and Avolio chose to expand Burns' original work on Transformational Leadership.

In an overview of the development of the Transformational Leadership model, Northouse (2001) states, "Bass extended Burn's [*sic*] work by giving more attention to followers' rather than leaders' needs, by suggesting that transformational leadership could apply to situations in which the outcomes were not positive, and by describing transactional and transformational leadership as a single continuum . . . rather than mutually independent continua (Yammarino, 1993)" (p. 135). The continuum of leadership as developed by Bass and Avolio contains seven factors, four ascribed to transformational leadership, two to transactional leadership and one to laissez-faire leadership. According to this model, transformational leaders employ one or more of the following factors:

1. Idealized influence: leaders who are admired, respected, and trusted are role models for followers.
2. Inspirational motivation: leaders motivate and inspire by providing meaningful challenge to followers' work.
3. Intellectual stimulation: leaders inspire followers by questioning assumptions and reframing problems.

4. Individual consideration: leaders act as a coach or mentor to individual followers.

(Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 3)

“Transactional leadership depends on contingent reinforcement, either as positive *contingent reward* (CR) or the more negative active or passive forms of *management-by-exception* (MBE-A or MBE-P)” (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 4). Laissez-faire leadership is essentially the lack of action, direction, or taking of responsibility on the part of the leader (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

In this definition of transformational leadership, the focus on the leader-follower relationship is strengthened by a deeper appreciation of the perspective of the follower. For example, three of the four factors associated with transformational leadership involve direct interaction between leader and follower, resulting in the idea that “leadership is not the sole responsibility of the leader, but rather emerges from the interplay between leaders and followers” (Northouse, 2001, p. 146). This relates to small school leadership in that, as the literature will reveal, effective smaller schools are characterized by teacher professional communities that, together with the school leadership, take responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of the teaching and learning that goes on in the school.

Transformational Leadership also expands on the new idea of what is considered to be effective motivation of followers. Transformational leaders do not impose their vision on their followers. Instead, they build it with them. They challenge their followers in ways that engage them meaningfully with their work. They mentor them, supporting them in learning what they need to know in order to do their work. This enables organizations to be adaptive and creative in responding to both planned changes and unforeseen challenges. It also requires that followers in

effective organizations be responsive and rise to challenges, growing and learning for not only their benefit, but also the benefit of the whole.

Senge's (1990) concept of the learning organization caught hold and spread rapidly as an organizational improvement program in the early 1990s and has continued to be used in organizational and educational research. In some ways, it is similar to the Transformational Leadership model, but it looks at the concepts from an organizational perspective rather than the more top-down leadership perspective. A learning organization, according to Senge (1990), is one that "is continually expanding its capacity to create its future" (p. 14). It does so by incorporating five specific technologies, "each [of which] provides a vital dimension in building organizations that can truly 'learn,' that can continually enhance their capacity to realize their highest aspirations" (Senge, 1990, p. 6). These technologies are:

1. Systems thinking: a conceptual framework that enables one to see full patterns of change rather than snapshots of parts and create more effective change.
2. Personal mastery: a discipline of continually clarifying and deepening one's personal vision, focusing energies, and learning.
3. Mental models: deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or images that influence how one understands the world and takes action.
4. Building shared vision: the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future one seeks to create.
5. Team learning: the ability of a group of people, through dialogue, to suspend assumption and "think together" (Senge, 1990, pp. 7-10).

All five technologies are crucial to the healthy functioning of a learning organization.

This description of leading a learning organization bears a strong resemblance to transformational leadership. “In a learning organization, leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for *building organizations* where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models—that is, they are responsible for learning” (Senge, 1990, p. 340). In both of these models it is the responsibility of the leaders to help the follower learn and grow. In the Transformational Leadership model, the leader is seen to take direct action on the follower’s behalf, creating challenges, asking questions, and offering opportunities for professional development. In the learning organization model, the responsibility of the leader is to create the culture where learning occurs at all levels.

These models and ideas make clear a concept common to current thinking about leadership, that leadership and change are inextricably linked. While this may seem obvious, it is important. It is easy to see that change is a major part of the general business environment, where these models developed. Influences such as changing technology, increasing globalization, shifting politics, etc., make the operation of a company a challenging practice in negotiating multiple changes. In an updated preface to a new edition of *The Transformational Leader*, Tichy & Devanna (1990) note that when they wrote the first edition, they had “talked about the accelerating pace of change. But in looking back on the past four years, we admit that change took place far more rapidly than even we would have predicted” (p. iii).

The case is no different in education. Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), educators, politicians, the media, and the public have felt pressure to do something different to

make certain that our students measure up to global standards. Many educational reform efforts have ensued, and several of those have concerned leadership. Leadership reforms have seen the implementation of several models developed in the business world such as total quality management, situational leadership theory, and Transformational Leadership. Other reform efforts have shifted leadership responsibilities from the principal or head of school to the faculty on site with practices such as site-based management, teacher leadership and empowerment, and team-based leadership. Yet other efforts attempted to shift conceptions of schools as learning *institutions* to schools as learning *organizations* (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Huberman, 1995; Lambert, 1998; T. Sergiovanni, 1999). All of these have helped develop school leadership models that, like the shift in organizational models before them, are based on leadership as a process rather than leadership as action.

#### *Leadership in Small Organizations*

Research in smaller organizations has focused on a variety of elements regarding leadership. The for-profit sector uses the term *small to medium enterprise* (SME) in discussions of smaller organizations. However, as Beaver (2003) notes, size is as defining a factor between small and large organizations as ownership. “Business ownership is one of the factors at the very heart of what characterises [*sic*] and differentiates a small business and is probably *the* key feature of difference (apart from size) between small and large firms and their management (Stanworth and Curran, 1973; Curran et al., 1986; Stanworth and Gray, 1991; Storey, 1994)” (Beaver, 2003, p. 63). While nonprofits have played a small part in the discussions of leadership and size, this field of research has primarily focused either on board and volunteer leadership or

on elements of creating and building a nonprofit, such as strategic planning and human resource management.

The differences between large and small organizations have not gone unnoticed. Handy (2001) describes the growing distinctions relative to size.

The world of organizations is fast dividing itself into fleas and elephants. The elephants are the large organizations of business and government; the fleas are the technological start-ups and the new dot-coms, they are the small consultancies and professional firms . . . [and] include the little businesses that pepper our main streets with restaurants, family-run stores . . . not to mention the hundreds of thousands of small not-for-profit organizations, as well as all our local schools and churches. (p. 29)

Handy goes on to note that the empirical research that has been performed has focused primarily on the elephants. Jensen and Luthans (2006) state, “yet, while the call for expanding the study of leadership within the context of newer, smaller organizations has existed for over a decade (Cooper, 1993), to date—especially as related to positive psychological capacities such as hope, optimism, and resiliency—no empirical research exists” (p. 255). Handy (2001) echoes this sentiment and proposes a number of questions facing practitioners and researchers in leadership and organizations. “Fleas, therefore, provide the new challenges for leadership, at all levels in society. What sort of leadership does a flea organization require, particularly an innovative flea? What are the characteristics of successful flea organizations? Can they, should they grow into elephants?” (p. 30) In a review of the literature regarding management and small organizations, Beaver (2003) takes Handy’s statement a step further. “It is now widely accepted that the particular characteristics of small firms require a different appreciation of management understanding and that the methods and techniques in the corporate sector are neither applicable,

valid nor relevant (Carson and Cromie, 1990; Storey, 1994; Jennings and Beaver, 1997; Beaver and Jennings, 2000)” (p. 63).

Despite Jensen and Luthans’ claim that there has been no empirical research on leadership in smaller organizations, a careful review reveals that some research has incorporated organizational size into studies of leadership. For instance, several scholars have noted that simply the level of resources available in smaller organizations is a factor in leadership and management practices. (Beaver, 2003; Handy, 2001; O'Regan & Ghobadian, 2005). Others have noted that the difference in the amount of face time between leaders and followers is a significant factor in building working relationships and other elements of leadership (Bass & Roggio, 2006; Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001).

Specific findings on leadership in smaller organizations have found that the new, post-industrial view of leadership is particularly applicable in smaller organizations. Grinnell (2003) looked at leadership styles of CEOs of two small firms and determined that “the findings provide a tentative profile of an ideal small business leader—one who makes moderate use of visionary, transactional, and empowering behaviors, while avoiding autocratic behaviors” (p. 40). Another study found that the impact of a transformational leader's vision on followers was more positive in smaller as opposed to larger organizations and proposed that this was because the leader had more direct contact with and influence on followers in the smaller organizations (Berson et al., 2001). Handy (2001) examined characteristics of leaders of small organizations and found that while “the sample was small and could not therefore be definitive . . . it did provide some clues to the nature of these leaders and the organizations that they had created, all of which were

successful in their own terms. The one defining and common characteristic was *passion*” (Handy, 2001, p. 31).

These findings are closely related to elements found in the Transformational Leadership and learning organization models. Handy’s (2001) identification of passion as an effective leadership characteristic could be seen as a translation of the commitment both leaders and followers demonstrate in effective organizations. Berson et al. (2001) specifically use the transformational model in their investigation and identify vision and the commutation of it as being facilitated in smaller organizations. Grinnell (2003) also describes visionary leaders as being more effective in smaller organizations as well as being leaders who empower their followers and who include all in generating ideas and making decisions. Beaver (2003) defines the differences as a “contrast between the informal, particularistic management style of the small firm and the more formal, bureaucratic administration of many large enterprises” (p. 65).

While the scholarship on leadership in smaller organizations is far from conclusive, it does reveal that there are differences in leadership characteristics. Smaller organizations provide more day-to-day contact between leader and follower. Development and communication of vision are significant components of leadership in effective smaller organizations. From these studies it is impossible to determine whether smaller organizations support leadership that is transformational in nature or if transformational leaders tend to gravitate to smaller organizations, but it is clear that the two are correlated. These themes are explored more deeply in the literature on leadership in smaller schools.

*Effective School Leadership*

The leadership models discussed above are particularly applicable to schools because they are founded on the main business of schools: learning. If viewed from a systems perspective, it is important that learning occurs at all levels in a school by all members of the school community, not just by the students with the classroom. Wheatley (1999), a systems thinker, states that “all organizations are fractal in nature,” that behaviors exhibited at one level of the organization are repeated throughout the organization (p. 128). Vaill (1996) talks of learning as “changes a person makes in himself or herself that increase the know-why and/or the know-what and/or the know-how the person possesses with respect to a given subject” (p. 21). At this point it becomes difficult to separate the ideas of Transformational Leadership, learning organizations, and professional development. This is not to say that in schools, leadership is only concerned with the professional growth of faculty. However, given that the main business of schools is educating students, the central focus of leadership is to increase the quality of education that happens in the school. Thus, professional development becomes one of the main responsibilities of school leadership. This being the case, it is no surprise that Transformational Leadership, learning organizations, and models similar to them, such as professional learning communities, have dominated the dialogue regarding educational leadership.

Sergiovanni (1999) names Transformational Leadership as the most powerful leadership method to promote learning communities and deep change in school reform. He describes public “schools as culturally tight but structurally loose” (p. 83). This means that there is little connection between teachers and students and the rest of the managerial structure of the organization. There is, however, a strong culture that is shared among students and teachers that

governs their actions. In a school, a principal who seeks to govern by management, especially when it comes to teachers and student performance, may be challenged or thwarted by the culture of the school. In this situation, Transformational Leadership can be much more effective than a more traditional leadership model. Transformational Leadership asks leaders and followers to work together within the culture of the school to create an idea of what must be done. Transformational leaders, claims Sergiovanni (1990), are much more effective because they know how to take advantage of the power of the culture to effect needed change.

Transformational Leadership is also particularly appropriate and often applied in educational settings because of the focus on learning. Systems theory, as previously stated, claims that organizations are fractal in nature—behavior at one level is repeated at all levels. If quality teaching and learning are going on at the leadership level, quality teaching and learning should be going on at the classroom level. Or, put another way, transformational leaders are helping teachers to teach by leading by example, employing Bass and Avolio's (1994) first factor of transformational leadership and modeling the teaching behaviors they want to see in the classrooms. In fact, the other three factors of the model, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, are considered best practices in classroom teaching. Good teachers inspire students with meaningful work, challenge their thinking with probing questions, and give attention to students' individual needs.

It is interesting to note, however, that Sergiovanni's (1990) call for Transformational Leadership is focused specifically on building and using the culture of the school. As previously noted, the Transformational Leadership model concerns itself more with the relationship between the leader and follower while the model of learning organizations is more concerned with the

learning culture. This is not to say that Sergiovanni is wrong, just that it would be more accurate to say that the learning organization model is extremely applicable to the culturally tight but structurally loose nature of schools and that transformational leadership is a good way to implement it.

Researchers and practitioners have translated ideas of learning organizations from the corporate world to the educational environment and often renamed them, for example, as communities of instructional practice or professional learning communities (PLCs) (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Huffman, 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 2002; Supowitz, 2002). Senge et al. (2000) recognized this and in response assembled a collection of work by educational scholars and practitioners that apply the learning organizational model to schools. In it, Joyner (2000) is quoted as saying that “staff development and team learning should be synonymous” (p. 391). PLCs are designed specifically to support teachers in working together to improve both their personal teaching practice as well as the overall quality of instruction within a school. Dufour and Eaker (1998) offer a list of characteristics of a PLC:

1. Shared mission, vision, and values: a collective commitment to guiding principles that articulate what the faculty believe and seek to create.
2. Collective inquiry: the seeking and testing of new teaching methods and reflection on the results.
3. Collaborative teams: groups of people who are able and willing to learn with and from each other and who are focused on organizational renewal.
4. Action orientation and experimentation: acknowledgement that learning occurs in the context of taking action and experience is the most effective teacher.

5. Continuous improvement: discomfort with the status quo and a constant search for a better way.
6. Results orientation: efforts are assessed in terms of results rather than intentions. (pp. 25-29)

This definition holds much in common with both transformational leadership and learning organizations, particularly in the idea that a shared vision is important.

Another perspective on the importance of shared vision in teacher communities examines how the characteristics of that vision are as important as having a vision in the first place. Westheimer (1998) states that, “The most commonly identified features of community, when explored empirically, leave tremendous room for variation” (p.128). He sets forth a model in which teacher communities are placed on a continuum identifying them as either more liberal or more collective. *Liberal* generally refers to a sense of individual responsibility and independence while *collective* refers to a sense of interdependence and joint responsibility. These ideals mark not only the characterization of the teacher community, but of the entire school. In a liberal school community the independence of students is encouraged and valued while in a collective school students are encouraged to recognize their connections to one another and the communities of which they are a part. It is not enough to simply have a strong teacher community dedicated to a shared vision. In questioning why it is so difficult to create the collegial community that many educational reform models and efforts say is so crucial, Westheimer argues that it is “Because there are no agreed-on models: These reformers are talking about very different kinds of professional communities” (1998, p. 137). According to this

model, what the community is dedicated to is just as important as the fact that the community is dedicated to a single vision.

There is much overlap in the ideas of learning organizations, PLCs and Transformational Leadership, and collective communities. It could be argued that these models are different perspectives on a collection of ideas about effective schools. This collection includes the following:

1. Effective schools should be involved in learning as a whole community that includes administration, principals or heads of school, and faculty.
2. The principal or head of school and each member of the faculty are responsible for participating individually and collectively in creating the vision, questioning the status quo, learning, reflecting, and affecting positive change.
3. The ideas or vision embraced by the community must reflect a sense of collaboration and interdependence as opposed to independence and individualism.
4. The community as a whole is effectively engaged in the post-industrial idea of leadership in which leadership is a process involving the organization rather than the role of a single individual.

However, all of the above models are leaving out two important groups who could also participate in the leadership of the school: students and parents.

One model that addresses an even wider view of school leadership is *leadership capacity* (Lambert, 1998). Leadership capacity refers to the ability of all members of the community to provide leadership and requires not only the participation of the faculty and the administration,

but of the students and parents as well. It requires that participation must be skillful in that people know how to contribute, collaborate, and learn together (p. 4).

Lambert (2003) states, “By ‘leadership capacity’ I mean *broad-based skillful participation in the work of leadership*” (p. 4). By skillful she means that organizational members know how to work and learn together. For example, in a school of low-level participation, a member’s “interactions with others are primarily social . . . [whereas a high-level participant] facilitates effective dialogue among members of the school community” (Lambert, 1998, p. 114). Lambert’s (2003) Leadership Capacity Matrix further explains how members of a school community can move from one quadrant to another as the school as a whole increases its leadership capacity. In it, members of the school community help the school move from low degrees of skill and participation to high degrees of skill and participation by improving their individual and group leadership abilities. The following are selected leadership behaviors from each of the quadrants of the matrix:

Low degree of skill – low degree of participation

- Principal as autocratic manager
- One-way flow of information; no shared vision
- Little innovation in teaching and learning

Low degree of skill – high degree of participation

- Principal as laissez-faire manager, many teachers develop unrelated programs
- Norms of individualism; no collective responsibility
- Undefined roles and responsibilities

High degree of skill – low degree of participation

- Principal and key teachers as purposeful leadership team
- Limited use of school wide data; information flows within designated leadership groups
- Efficient designated leaders; others serve in traditional roles
- Student achievement is static or shows slight improvement

High degree of skill – high degree of participation

- Principal, teachers, parents, and students as skillful leaders
- Shared vision resulting in program coherence
- Broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility reflected in roles and actions
- Reflective practice that leads consistently to innovation (Lambert, 2003, p. 5)

Several of these elements are in accordance with the models previously discussed. For instance, shared vision, reflective practice, and continual innovation, and even laissez-faire leadership are all concepts found in the descriptions of Transformational Leadership, learning organizations, and PLCs. However, one element in the last grouping is specific to this model: parent and student participation in leadership. Parent involvement is often seen as a double-edged sword in that faculty and staff often fear what parental involvement might mean and are hesitant to give up power over curriculum, policy, and practice. Student involvement is seldom given serious consideration or responsibility. The leadership capacity model, though, believes that parents and students are integral to the school community and thus play a significant role in the leadership of the school. This has also been supported by research. “The evidence is

consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life" (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 7).

### *Small School Leadership*

Smaller schools have been extensively researched and are widely recognized as one of the most effective ways of improving student achievement. Several reviews of the research of the last 20 years show that small schools improve attendance, decrease dropout rates, improve student attitudes, decrease discipline problems, and increase academic performance (Cotton, 2001; McComb, 2000; Raywid, 1999). As previously described, SWAS, as a result of the research, are being carved from larger schools in major urban communities in order to combat the perceived ills of the educational system in this country. Howley (2002) states

In cities and suburbs, 'small schools' has recently become a *reform movement*.<sup>8</sup> Rural communities, however, struggle to *maintain* small schools in the face of states' attempts to close them on business principles based on cheap inputs.<sup>9</sup> These differing interpretations have practical significance because confounding *new, reformist* small schools with *extant, traditional* small schools obscures the salient structural issues that are the actual object of most research related to small schools. (p. 3.3)

McAndrews and Anderson (2002) also state that, "Although few studies have been conducted on the school-within-a-school model itself, proponents infer that the benefits of a school within a school closely parallel those found in small schools . . ." (p. 1).

These statements are indicative of a major hurdle facing smaller schools today. The field of education is finding that it cannot reliably generalize lessons from small schools to SWAS.

Howley (2002) also says

Educators tend to believe that a practice proven effective in one setting can be transferred to another. . . . When, however, the practice itself and the setting (smaller school size) are one and the same, the assumption seems more especially

dubious than usual. Can one transfer a setting out of its setting? It seems illogical.  
(p. 3.7)

It is, in fact, illogical. In addition, the enormous amount of resources dedicated to the SWAS reform movement which is based on "transferring a setting out of its setting" may also be ill-advised.

SWAS do not necessarily show the strong gains in student achievement evidenced by naturally small schools. For instance, an evaluation (Rhodes, Smerdon, Burt, Evan, Martinez, & Means, 2005) of the results of The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's High School Grants Initiative reports that

*Trends in student-level achievement data for math were mixed.* In one of the two districts where trends on state assessment data could be examined, we saw moderately larger improvements in math over time in foundation-supported schools than elsewhere in the district. The other district experienced moderately smaller improvements in math. (p. 2)

A newspaper article discussing The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations efforts reports that, "the changes [resulting from transforming a large school into smaller schools] were often so divisive — and the academic results so mixed — that the Gates Foundation has stopped always pushing small as a first step in improving big high schools" (Shaw, 2006, ¶ 5). Howley (2004) simply states, "The record of success for such within-school grouping efforts is not good (Lee, Ready, & Johnson, 2001; Raywid & Schmerler, 2003)" (p. 2).

The use of research from one school structure in the implementation of another is problematic. Because SWAS projects have been equated with small schools in the research, the less than stellar results from SWAS might be applied in reverse and inhibit the development of naturally small schools. Raywid notes that both small schools and SWAS must fight environments not designed to support them. "The effort to create and sustain small schools,

which has for the last several decades been bedeviled by bureaucratic resistance, public misunderstanding, and a mighty struggle for resources and autonomy, does not get much easier” (Raywid, 2002, p. ix). In the same light, negative feedback from SWAS will not make it any easier for naturally small schools to survive, much less thrive. SWAS remain extremely popular and major projects to implement them are ongoing in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Denver, Oakland, Boston, and many other large urban centers.

The popularity of both small schools and educational leadership as research topics would suggest that leadership in small schools would have received attention as well. The research on small organizations reveals that there are differences between leadership in large and small organizations. Clearly small and large school leadership should be examined as well. However, the amount of research directed at this issue has remained minimal. Raywid et al. (2003) states

Much has been written about the virtues and advantages of downsized schools, and some advice has been developed on how to bring about the transformation of the comprehensive high school or the oversized elementary school into *humanly* sized units. But very little has been written about what we need to do in order to permit small schools and SWAS to succeed. What kinds of conditions, controls, and supports external to these new units are essential to sustaining them? (p. 2)

In an article entitled “Leading Small: Eight Lessons for Leaders in Transforming Large Comprehensive High Schools,” Copland and Boatright (2004) do not reference studies of leadership of small schools. They do, however, attempt to present information useful for large-to-small school conversion projects, asking, “what leadership lessons can those who seek to transform large comprehensive high schools derive from the knowledge base that is emerging on small schools?” (Copland & Boatright, 2004, p. 763) The authors answer with statements such as, “In what follows, we synthesize what is known about the nature of leadership in successful small schools . . .” (p. 764) and, “leadership lessons gleaned from studies of successful small

schools offer insights for those engaged in converting large schools . . . ” (p. 768). Specific studies are not cited and it is not clear if the lessons they derive are from naturally smaller schools or from large to small school conversion. This supports the claim that small school leadership simply has not been studied in such a way as to provide clear guidelines for either naturally small schools or SWAS.

While most research on indicators of educational effectiveness has focused on naturally small schools, the findings on leadership have mainly come from research on SWAS or large-to-small school conversions. In the examination of leadership in small schools, it is important to differentiate between leading a small school and leading SWAS or even the conversion of a large school. To see them as the same would mirror the mistakes being made in using naturally small school research to argue the case for SWAS. Effective leadership of one might look very different from the other, or it might look quite similar. However, research on naturally small schools has been primarily concerned with student achievement. Research on SWAS has painted a larger picture. Thus, a study of leadership in smaller schools relies on the SWAS literature to provide a base from which to work.

The research herein looks at how leadership of smaller schools has been examined in urban smaller schools, both naturally small and SWAS. Rural small school studies have not been targeted. “The tendency for the school to be at the heart of the community, especially in a rural or remote area, can present additional challenges for its leader” (Clarke & Wildy, 2004, p. 558). The authors state that these challenges can include an underestimation of the effects of poverty and disadvantage as well as a high expectation that the school administrator focus on and build relationships with the community (p. 358). This is not to say that rural and urban schools cannot

learn from one another. However, as Howley (2004) claims, it is difficult to automatically transfer research from one setting to another when the subject of the research is the setting itself. Also not included are studies of small schools in other countries. The current issues with high-stakes testing and school district policies that tend to favor large schools create enough of a difference between what leadership is and how it is studied in small schools in the United States that the inclusion of international studies would expand the focus beyond the intention of this review. Furthermore, self-published reports by reform projects that do not fully explain research methods have been excluded from this discussion because the quality of the study could not be determined. In addition, two dissertations that were of high enough quality to offer a significant contribution to the knowledge base regarding leadership in small schools have been included in this discussion.

While the definition of small schools varies considerably, recent literature suggests that schools of about 300-400 students, especially at the secondary level, are optimal for realizing student gains and other advantages. (Darling Hammond, Aneesh, & Ort, 2002; Wasley et al., 2000). Several studies, which did include size in their study, have been excluded from this discussion because size does not necessarily classify small schools. For instance, one study looked at the role of the leader in urban high schools (Blank, 1987) and while it examined leadership characteristics and how they varied in terms of school size, the smallest school included was more than 800 students. The sample of high schools was also small, leading the author to admit that “several other leadership indicators, such as decisions on curriculum, number of meetings with teachers and teacher assignment and scheduling, may show a significant association with school size with a larger sample of schools” (Blank, 1987, p. 76).

This review includes studies that define smaller schools as having no more than 400 students distributed over several grades; schools with over 400 students in a single grade level are not considered small due to the challenge of creating a cohesive community. As pointed out by Howley (2002)

Enrollment per grade is a better metric of size than total enrollment. With this measure it's easy to see that a ninth-grade academy with 1,500 students is really four times as large as a 9-12 high school with exactly the same total enrollment, just as a K-2 school enrolling 800 students is at least three times the size of a K-8 school enrolling 800 students. (p. 3.5)

As stated previously, most research that examines naturally smaller schools does not include leadership in the research focus. Likewise, reports on large-to-small school and learning community conversions focus primarily on student achievement. However, some reports include examination of leadership and related issues such as building collegial cultures, providing teacher support, and developing professional communities as factors in the conversion effort. These reports form a small body of data that provides the basis for generating a number of questions and suggestions about leading small schools.

The research on smaller school leadership comprises several different kinds of publications, incorporates several different research methods, and looks at leadership from several perspectives (See Illustration 2.1). These are reviewed briefly here in order to provide a context for how information on leadership has been presented.

Author(s)	Quantitative Methods		Qualitative Methods				Leadership Perspective			Publication Type			Participant Groups				Project Location
	Analysis of school data	Analysis of survey data	Case study	Action Research	Document Analysis	Interview/Observations	Effective Leadership	Teacher Community	Organizational Change	Conference Paper	Project Report	Dissertation	Administrators	Teachers	Parents	Students	
NY Networks for School Renewal, 2001	λ	λ	λ	λ		λ		λ			λ		λ	λ			New York, NY
Carrico, 2003	λ	λ	λ			λ	λ					λ	λ	λ			
Hausman & Goldring, 1996	λ						λ			λ				λ			
Kahne et al., 2006	λ	λ								λ			λ			λ	Chicago, IL
Maniloff, 2004	λ	λ										λ		λ			
Peterson, Marks, & Warren, 1996	λ	λ			λ	λ			λ		λ		λ	λ			National: SBDM
Reed, 2003			λ			λ			λ				λ	λ	λ		
Tighe, Wang, & Foley, 2002		λ				λ					λ			λ			Philadelphia, PA
Wallach, 2002			λ		λ	λ			λ		λ		λ	λ	λ	λ	Seattle, WA
Wasley et al., 2000	λ					λ					λ		λ	λ			Chicago, IL
Zheng, 1996		λ					λ			λ			λ	λ			
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	

Illustration 2.1 Chart of studies by distribution of methods, areas of focus, subjects queried, and project locations.

As evidenced in Illustration 2.1, these studies represent a balanced use of methods in terms of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method designs. A quick overview reveals some basic trends in this collection of research.

Across all included studies, the quantitative methods employed were analysis of school data and analysis of survey data. School data included demographics, size of school, socioeconomic status (SES), and standardized test scores. Educational research is almost always concerned, as it should be, with student achievement. Achievement is most easily measured by standardized test scores, particularly in study samples that include large schools or large numbers of schools. These studies also used test scores as the primary method of measuring student achievement and often adjusted for the effects of SES. Survey data always included surveys administered to teachers, and usually included administrators. Teachers were the primary targets of surveys because in most studies the focus of investigation was either on the professional climate of the school or on the teachers' perceptions of leader effectiveness.

Qualitative methods included case study, action research, document analysis, and analyses of interviews and observations. Case studies constituted either the entire report or were created and then analyzed for answers to research questions for a larger, more comprehensive report and incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods such as surveys, document review, observations, and interviews. Documents reviewed included staff meeting minutes, directives from projects, and school district policy statements. Interviews were always conducted with teachers and sometimes conducted with administrators, students, and parents in either individual or focus group settings. Observations were primarily of staff meetings or other group work and sometimes included classroom observations. One study employed action research to work with teachers to discover phenomena related to leadership and

other aspects of their small school. The primary focus of these studies was on the impressions, perceptions, and opinions of the teachers in these schools.

The heavy use of quantitative methods supports the tendency of education to define student achievement in terms of test scores. The extensive use of qualitative methods of interviews and observations demonstrates the tendency to focus on larger questions of school environment in terms of faculty impressions. There is little representation of quantitative methods used to develop models of smaller school leadership. There is also a lack of studies that examine attitudes of students and parents regarding the leadership of the school.

A great deal of research looks at teacher leadership, leadership behaviors, leadership models, and leadership challenges in schools. However, it does not relate these elements specifically to school size or, in particular, how leadership models translate into smaller school settings. There is also a great deal of peer-reviewed, published research on smaller schools, most of which focuses on student issues such as safety, test scores, or graduation rates. Leadership research and smaller school research do not intersect very often. The literature contains very few peer-reviewed, published studies that identify *small schools* or *school size* and *leadership* as key concepts. Three of the studies included in this review were presented at conferences of research-oriented organizations. Two studies were dissertations. Six studies, the majority, were larger-scale project reports, either mid-term or final evaluations of small school design or transformation efforts. They are generally large, heavily funded, collaborative efforts that include a large urban school district such as New York City or Chicago, a large granting organization such as The Annenberg Foundation or The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, an office of the Department of Education or Regional Educational Laboratory, or all of these. The large number of studies that are self-published by reform projects have a broad focus in their research

intentions and include leadership and leadership-related issues as part of the subsequent findings. This shows that small school leadership is in its early stages as a specific field of inquiry.

A review of project locations reveals that the greatest efforts at creating small learning communities and studying them have occurred in the largest urban centers. The studies reviewed here are project reports from New York (*Final report of the evaluation of New York Network for School Renewal: An Annenberg Foundation challenge for New York City*, 2001), Chicago (Kahne, Sporte, Torre, & Easton, 2006; Wasley et al., 2000), Philadelphia (Tighe, Wang, & Foley, 2002), and Seattle (Wallach, 2002). Several other cities have similar projects and have not published reports as they are still in progress. Most began in 2000 or 2001 and have not yet been completed. Other completed projects have also published reports but have not been included here because they do not include reflections on leadership or for other reasons such as lack of explanation of method. The review of project reports shows a tendency on the part of researchers, lawmakers, and the public to focus on larger schools located in urban centers.

While most smaller school research focuses on student-achievement measures, project reports and more comprehensive examinations of both smaller schools and SWAS recognize that leadership issues have a strong role in realizing the student benefits. These can include the actions, behaviors, styles, and traits of leaders; the manner and extent to which leaders include teachers and other community members in decision making processes; the leadership specific to transitioning larger schools to smaller ones; and the collegial and collaborative atmosphere leaders engender in their schools. The literature reveals a wide number of school elements that are directly influenced by leadership. Studies included look at not only specific leadership behaviors and attributes, but also at elements attributed to or heavily influenced by leadership such as teacher leadership, school professional climate, collegiality, and communication of

vision. These are echoes of concepts previously discussed in this literature review. The reviewed articles are divided into three major categories. The first category focuses on the perceived effectiveness of leaders as it relates to small schools. The second concentrates on leading teachers in small schools and includes developing a professional community, encouraging teacher leadership and collaboration, and communicating vision to teachers. The third focuses on the process of transforming large schools into smaller schools and learning communities. Most of the studies included in this review, particularly the large project reports, ask many research questions that examine everything from student achievement to accountability structures. Only those questions that focus on leadership are examined here.

### *Leader Effectiveness*

Hausman and Goldring (1996) in a study of magnet versus non-magnet schools in Cincinnati asked, “(1) Do differences exist between magnet and non-magnet teachers’ rating of effective leadership? and (2) What influence do school background characteristics, student achievement, teacher professionalism, and other workplace conditions exert on teachers’ ratings of effective principal leadership?” (p. 7) The study includes full magnet schools that had not added or dropped a magnet program or undergone some sort of transition such as renovation or significant increases in student population within the previous two years. Ten selected magnet schools were matched with ten non-magnet schools according to racial balance of African-American students. Teachers at these schools were asked to complete a six-item modified survey on principal effectiveness that was originally developed for determining gender-related perceptions of leadership and power in secondary schools. The study had a clear focus, a substantial sample and a high response rate, and thorough analyses of data (Hausman & Goldring, 1996, pp. 10-11). However, it is difficult to know if the strength of the survey was

weakened by the modifications. It seems that it originally measured several factors using a number of items, and that this study only used the items pertaining to leadership effectiveness. The exclusion of the other items might have affected how participants answered.

Hausman and Goldring (1996) state that among magnet schools, “school size was the only significant predictor of effective principal leadership. As the total student enrollment increased, magnet principals were perceived by their teachers as less effective” (p. 14). School size in the non-magnet schools studied was not significant. The researchers offer a potential explanation by suggesting that the non-magnet schools had significantly higher enrollment overall than the magnet schools and thus had greater demands on their time in terms of external management issues (1996, p 17).

The findings highlight the need to define effective principal leadership. The researchers acknowledge that “the study of leadership has led to a plethora of conclusions and little consensus about what effective principal leadership entails” (Hausman & Goldring, 1996, p. 4). The items on the survey that defined effective principal leadership refer to the principal’s interest in innovative ideas, awareness of what goes on in classrooms, visibility throughout the school, ability to secure resources, acknowledgement of staff effort, and ability to handle outside pressures. These items focus specifically on the leader’s behavior and seem to embrace the idea of leadership as a role of the person at the top of the organization. However, they at least acknowledge that followers’ input is important to the function of the school.

Zheng (1996) used an instructional leadership model based on the position that while a principal’s management behaviors do not directly impact student learning, they do affect “two features of a school’s social organization—climate and instructional organization” (p. 5). The study asked one question that pertained to school size: “what are the influence of school contexts

on principals' perceived effectiveness in instructional management?" (Zheng, 1996, p. 12) The study used data from the 1993-1994 collection of the Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. The sample is national and includes principals from public and private schools of different sizes, locations, levels, affiliations, etc. The study found that in terms of school size, "enrollment size seems to be a significant factor only in public schools . . . for the increase of every student in the total enrollment size, the perceived effectiveness of the public school principal's instructional leadership drops 0.0001 point, and it is statistically significant" (Zheng, 1996, pp. 19-20). However, the study was only exploratory in nature and, given the national sample, lacks the personal context that could offer further insight into how size of school affects perceived leadership effectiveness. Like Hausman and Goldring, Zheng found that defining leadership effectiveness was tricky and was affected by a number of personal conditions, such as education, organizational conditions, SES, and school demographics.

The third study (Carrico, 2003) of leader effectiveness is a dissertation that examined specific leadership characteristics in small secondary schools that improved student achievement. The study sought to answer questions regarding the similarities and differences across three small schools in terms of instructional leadership, communication, and empowerment. It also asked what communications practices had an impact on instructional leadership and empowerment (Carrico, 2003, pp. 4-5). The researcher equated student achievement with school effectiveness and used data from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), a standardized test, to determine school effectiveness. Test data were correlated with data from teacher surveys and supplemented with information from interviews with principals.

In terms of what is relevant to smaller school leadership, the study finds that empowerment is dependent on the levels of leadership and responsibility assumed by faculty members within the school. “The importance of the difference [between different levels of empowerment] is that staff members need to have the opportunity to internalize and build the feeling of ownership” (Carrico, 2003, p. 181). Both the learning organizational model and the leadership capacity model acknowledge the importance of everyone’s commitment to and involvement in the leadership of the organization. The idea here, that staff members need to feel a sense of ownership, is very similar. Interestingly, this also echoes the main characteristic, other than size, named in the literature that differentiates small from large businesses. Carrico (2003) also finds that including other stakeholders such as parents in leadership roles in the school “can provide a holistic approach to goal attainment [such as student achievement]” (p. 182). Parent involvement in schools is specifically acknowledged by Lambert (1998) as the leadership capacity model important to effective schooling.

The first two studies address leadership effectiveness and include the factor of school size in their analyses. They reveal that in smaller schools leaders tend to be viewed as more effective, though the reasons why are not explored. Both of these studies occurred early in the surge of interest in small schools. The third study displays a perspective of leader effectiveness that is more in line with the post-industrial view of leadership as process, but places the responsibility for that process with the principal in terms of how he or she communicated and worked with others in the school. Leadership effectiveness, particularly in the more organizationally focused models of learning organizations and leadership capacity, is the responsibility of the whole community.

*Teacher Communities*

Wasley et al. (2000) conducted a study “at a time when the small schools movement was just gaining momentum nationwide. It began in New York, spread to Philadelphia, then to Chicago and other cities” (p. 3). This was a two-year, three-part study which included: an identification and classification of Chicago’s small schools; an analysis of several sets of quantitative data such as student test scores, drop out rates, and absenteeism; and an ethnographic analysis of a subset of eight schools. This study asked one question that yielded findings related to leadership: “what changes are teachers and principals making in small schools that they believe have a positive effect on student performance?” (Wasley et al., 2000, p. 5) A survey administered to both teachers and administrators provided information that was presented under the heading, “teachers felt more efficacious in small schools” (Wasley et al., 2000, p. 38). Wasley et al. (2000) find that “small-high-school teachers tended to report a stronger professional community than teachers working in other high schools, . . . teachers are more likely to collaborate with colleagues in small schools,” . . . and “teachers [in smaller schools] are more able to build a coherent educational program for students between disciplines and across grade levels” (pp. 38, 44, 45-46).

The main weakness of the study is in the research question, “what changes are teachers and principals making in small schools that they believe have a positive impact on student achievement?” (Wasley et al., 2000, p. 5) There are problems here. What difference does it make if the teachers and principals believe the changes are making a difference if they actually do not? Do the changes have an impact on student achievement or not? If so, how can one determine that? Another weakness is that the development of the teacher survey is not described, so there is no way to evaluate its validity. Also, the small sample of schools that were studied in depth

means that the statistical power was low. However, the study used a broad collection of both quantitative and qualitative data that allowed for initial findings from teacher surveys to be confirmed by interviews and observations.

The findings by Wasley et al. regarding leadership in small schools are significant and highlight themes often found elsewhere in the research. For instance, this study, like several others, challenges conventional assumptions of who the leader is and what he or she does. Leadership in smaller schools is a shared responsibility, particularly in the realm of instruction. Leadership is not just a question of what the head or principal of a school is doing, it concerns what the faculty is doing as well. In this study, the leadership findings support this by revealing several characteristics about the leadership community of teachers in smaller schools. First, they report simply that smaller schools have a stronger professional community (Wasley et al., 2000, p. 38). The concept of professional community as defined here includes a high degree of trust, openness to change, and commitment to professional development. The researchers also state that small-school teachers tend to collaborate with and learn more from fellow teachers and that they work together to build a coherent educational program for students (pp. 46-47). Instructional leadership, as will be emphasized later, is considered to be a key component of strong leadership in small schools. When the teaching culture is one that is collaborative, learning-oriented, and focused on building a cohesive curriculum, the teachers are taking the lead in terms of instruction.

The evaluation of the New York Networks for School Renewal (NYNSR) project (*Final report*, 2001) also focused on teacher communities. The project involved four organizations in a major reform effort that began in 1993 to create and support the development of smaller schools. These sponsor organizations included the Center for Collaborative Education, the Center for

Educational Improvement, New Visions for Public Schools, and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. The study was conducted by a group of research organizations led by New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy, which had been studying and evaluating aspects of the project since 1995. The report states, "The sponsor organizations posed broad questions for the Research Consortium about the implementation of the NYNSR project, the nature of the project's academic outcomes in comparison to citywide results, and the costs and equity implications" (*Final report*, 2001, p. 1). The question that revealed lessons about leadership focused on "the extent to which the NYNSR goals and principles were carried out in the participating schools" (*Final report*, 2001, p. 27).

The findings pertaining to leadership and teacher communities relate to three of the principles of the NYNSR project: small school size and school autonomy, professional development, and parent and community support. While the report does not explain these in detail, it discusses School Leadership Teams made up of school personnel, parents, and students. These teams were in place in 85% of the project schools. Teachers at these schools "meet frequently to collaborate on curriculum design; to discuss individual students; to plan staff development activities; and to share general information" (*Final report*, 2001, p. 28). The teachers in these schools also describe the teams as collegial and collaborative. Because the study reports findings on the group of schools as a whole and not individual schools it is difficult to draw specific conclusions, but it seems to be describing schools in which teachers act as a collective and take responsibility for instructional leadership. They make decisions about instruction, collaborate on curriculum, and figure out their own professional development in environments that are supportive of these ends. The study also finds that professional development is not only planned by the school leadership committees, but is "built into the 'daily

work of teaching' and thus permeate(s) the school culture" (*Final report*, 2001, p. 31). Again the theme of collective leadership is recognized as a component of effective smaller schools.

Another finding related to the participation of everyone is that parent and greater community involvement is valued and that at NYNSR schools the staff "are generally open to parents and their concerns and eagerly seek parental cooperation in their educational endeavors" (*Final report*, 2001, p. 31). This, combined with the finding that "Parental support of the administrator as the leader of the school was reported to be a key aspect of a school being able to carry out its educational mission" (*Final report*, 2001, p. 31), creates a complex picture of teacher and administrator leadership. Efforts on the part of both teachers and administrators to include parents in the school's work seem to translate into parental acknowledgment of school leadership, which, in the eyes of the school, help greatly in doing that work. This was one of only two studies in this collection to look at the involvement of parents and students in the leadership of the school, a characteristic of high levels of leadership capacity as defined by Lambert (2003).

Tighe et al. (2000) looked at school based management in a study of the Children Achieving project in Philadelphia. This project decentralized district control and resources and allocated them to smaller pockets of schools. While several schools used small learning communities as part of their reform efforts, small learning communities were not adopted as a system-wide program. This particular report was a quantitative analysis of several sets of data that included school size and focused primarily on student achievement. One of the study's questions touched on leadership in terms of teacher communities, asking, "do identified school-level characteristics, fourth grade reading achievement, and certain Children Achieving reform variables significantly relate to teacher-reported school conditions and other aspects of Children Achieving?" (Tighe et al., 2002, p. 26) The researchers state that "schools with Small Learning

Communities were more likely to have fewer *Obstacles to Student Learning* and more *Teacher Professional Community*” (Tighe et al., 2002, p. 30, italics in original), which were specific variables examined in the analysis.

The study employed a complex quantitative design that used a variety of sets of data including student test scores, demographics, and, particular to the data regarding leadership, a teacher survey. A team of researchers from the Consortium for Chicago School Research along with teachers from Philadelphia schools constructed the survey. The survey incorporated revised items from other teacher surveys as well as ones specifically constructed for the context of the Philadelphia reform effort. The survey items were tested for reliability and a series of factor analyses were performed. It was administered to over 12,000 teachers with a 63% return rate, resulting in very solid data.

The study did not specifically define teacher professional community; this may be because it was a small aspect of a larger study. However, it is possible to infer what might be meant. The study (Tighe et al., 2002) asserts that

Higher poverty, larger school size, and dissatisfaction with Small Learning Communities all significantly increased the odds of being in an unsafe school, a school with more Obstacles to Student Learning, and schools with a weaker sense of Teacher Professional Community. (p. 29)

From this it might be surmised that “teacher professional community” means that teachers are satisfied with the school and the other teachers in it and have a sense of knowing what they are doing. Also, given the name of the variable, it likely includes a focus on instructional practice and possibly on collegiality. It also seems a safe assumption that a higher sense of teacher professional community in a school is a good thing in the eyes of the researchers. Again, the acknowledgement of the professional community as being an important part of effective

organizations is found in both the literature on organizational leadership, particularly in discussion of learning organizations, and on school leadership, particularly in the leadership capacity model. For instance, the leadership capacity model identifies teacher actions such as “engages colleagues in identifying and acknowledging problems” and “actively seeks to involve others in designing programs and policies” (Lambert, 1998, pp. 117, 120). These specific actions, though, have not been researched in terms of importance to student achievement, perceptions of school climate, or other indicators of school effectiveness.

Reed (2003) took a close look at one particular school (CASE) in the Chicago public school system in order to “determine why CASE students had experienced achievement gains while students at other small schools within the host site [project] did not” (p. 3). The study asked, “did the CASE school achieve distinctiveness as defined by characteristics identified in recent literature about successful small schools?” (Reed, 2003, p. 12) A case study approach used interviews of the teachers, principal, and classroom volunteers, plus observations and surveys. Initial data gathering was followed up with further meetings to pursue emerging issues and clarify previous answers. Data were analyzed based on categories culled from recent literature on small schools.

The study found that the school had a number of factors that strengthened program leadership, namely, “co-teaching and the spirit of collaboration that was everywhere present in CASE . . . and a strong sense of professional dedication that every CASE teacher exuded” (Reed, 2003, pp. 19-20). Lambert (2003) speaks of teachers who do not see themselves as leaders nor as being embedded in “old definitions of leadership as tied to role, position, and formal authority” (p. 18). She further states that participation in leadership by every teacher is an important characteristic of high-functioning schools. The description of every CASE teacher as having a

strong sense of professional dedication is an example of this principle. This was supported within the school by the finding that vision and mission, characteristics named throughout the leadership literature as part of effective organizations, were prevalent throughout the school in both action and environment. It was also supported by the finding that the parents and the extended community were as supportive and dedicated to the success of the school as the faculty (Reed, 2003, p. 19). These findings pertain to leadership of small schools in that this school appears to have a high degree of shared leadership, not only among the teachers, but with the parents and community as well. This is the second study in this collection to look at parents as part of school leadership. While these findings were not deeply explored in the study, the overall impression is that the whole school was dedicated to helping students achieve and would be rated as having extremely high leadership capacity. “The people of CASE exhibited unity of purpose, high expectations, and strong aspirations for success for all students. At CASE students were the first priority” (p. 19).

Another perspective on leadership in smaller schools as related to teacher community is found in a study by Maniloff (2004), which examined teachers’ perceptions of working conditions in relation to the size of schools. The study examined responses of 7,601 high school teachers in North Carolina to the Teachers Working Conditions Survey developed by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission. The survey was administered at the end of the year, and “the timing of the survey may have made the responses more negative, due to the fatigue of the teachers” (Maniloff, 2004, p. 47). Also, when looking at the respondents by size of school, the power of the study is compromised. Of the total number of high school teachers who responded, 99 were from a total of 9 small schools, 1,522 were from a total of 54 medium-sized schools, and 5,980 were from a total of 152 large schools. The small school responses both in

number and in number of schools represented are far outnumbered. However, the study does support the idea that small schools and positive teacher communities are correlated.

The study found that teachers generally rated all factors as unfavorable, which the researcher attributes to the fact that the survey was administered at the end of the school year when teachers may have been tired. However, the teachers in smaller schools rated all factors slightly more favorably than teachers in medium-sized or large schools, but the differences were small. Maniloff (2004) concludes that “although more research is needed in this area, it may be that very small organizations support stronger, more meaningful relationships which translate into more positive views of relationships at work” (p. 71). While this study did not examine teacher community specifically, it did look at factors that may act as indicators of the quality of relationships that teachers have at work. This study tends to support the idea that while small schools do not guarantee positive teacher communities, they do make it easier for them to happen.

Kahne et al. (2006) recently released a study of the first three years of the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative (CHSRI). The study found that CHSRI teachers in small high schools “were much more likely to report working in contexts characterized by teacher influence, innovation, collective responsibility, and teacher-teacher trust than similar teachers in other Chicago high schools” (Kahne et al., 2006, p. 2). It also found that these teachers were “slightly more likely to report . . . opportunities for reflective dialog, professional development and other facilitators of instructional improvement” (Kahne et al., 2006, p. 2). This most recent study is also most indicative of elements of leadership models that focus on the organization. In particular, items such as reflective dialog, collective responsibility, and trust are highlighted as

elements of both strong learning organizations and of schools with high leadership capacity.

(Lambert, 2003; Senge, 1990)

Oddly enough, the researchers also found that “student and teacher reports of instruction in small schools were generally quite similar to reports in other schools with comparable students” (Kahne et al., 2006, p. 2). The findings here reveal that while small schools tend to go hand in hand with teacher cultures that are open to innovation of practice, instruction in these schools is not necessarily any different from instruction in larger schools. The researchers do not offer any possible explanations for this, but it raises an interesting question: if instruction is similar in small and large schools, what is it about a smaller school setting that is more conducive to increased student achievement? Unfortunately, the project has only been underway for three years and many schools within the project had only just begun the process of becoming a small school. It may be that the establishment of teacher community has not yet led to changes in instruction, or it may be that differences in instruction are not the only thing that makes a difference in student learning. Regardless, the results from this study do indicate that in smaller schools teachers are more likely to report more collegial atmospheres that support continual instructional improvement.

### *Transforming Organizational Structure*

Before conversions to small schools became popular, reform efforts related to organizational structure, particularly in the early 1990s, tended to focus on putting more power in the hands of the teachers. Peterson, Marks, and Warren (1996) examined highly effective schools employing School-Based Decision Making (SBDM). SBDM involves the establishment of decision-making structures that include staff and may cover areas such as budgeting, personnel, curriculum, or all of these. The researchers (Peterson, et. al., 1996) recognize that SBDM and

organizational features of the school are influenced by each other, though “some features may shape the impact of school reforms” (p. 4). One of these features is school size. In setting up the premise for the study they state, “As organizations increase in size they tend to increase the centralization of decision making . . . We might expect larger schools to be different in how they implement and use SBDM and the nature of power and authority in the school” (p. 5).

Peterson et al. (1996) very carefully constructed the study to look at a wide variety of schools and implementation methods of SBDM. The quantitative data produced by the survey were checked for validity through thorough investigation of the school culture and individual teacher and administrator perceptions. The researchers found that although school size seemed unrelated to variations in SBDM, it did relate to variations in power relations (p. 17). These relations include consolidated principal power, consolidated small group power, power shared among teachers, and power shared among teachers and administrators (Peterson et al., 1996, p. 28). While there was no single particular model of SBDM employed by schools of any particular size, Peterson et al. found that “when the schools were comparatively large, power more often rests with the principal . . . When the school size is comparatively small power more often rests with the teachers” (p. 20). Again this supports the argument that elements now recognized as characteristic of good leadership such as distributed power are more easily created in smaller school settings.

The SWAS movement has also offered lessons in smaller school leadership. It has been noted that the foundation of the SWAS movement may be unreliably founded on the research regarding naturally small schools. Reversing the process would not be wise. However, these lessons can be taken as additions to the findings from other research and enrich the process of developing and testing ideas about smaller school leadership. In a 2002 study documenting the

conversion of Mountlake Terrace High School into four small learning communities, Wallach asked a number of questions related to what the leaders of the restructuring process at the school did to meet the challenges of transforming from a large school into small learning communities. While Wallach (2002) focused on the conversion process and not on leadership of small schools, the study is included because some of the findings underscore others discussed in this literature review. Those questions that pertain directly to leadership are: (1) How can the administrative team share decision-making power and plan for leadership changes, and (2) how can the Steering Team build staff buy in and adequately address concerns? (Wallach, 2002, p. 33)

To address these questions the researcher conducted five months of interviews, focus groups, and observations that included sessions with teachers, administrators, students, parents, and district personnel. Wallach (2002) found that the administration had made certain that teacher input was a top priority in all work done on the process from the very beginning. They constantly asked for teacher input and made changes in the conversion plan accordingly. In addition, they created a Steering Team that included seven teachers and all decision-making power rested with the team. She found that this seemed to enable teachers who were hesitant regarding the change to the school to not only air their fears and concerns, but act on them as well. These findings relate organizational restructuring leadership to the teacher community, which is crucial to effective leadership. Although this study specifically examined the conversion process and not the leadership of established small schools, it still demonstrates that teacher participation is an important element of small school functioning.

#### *The Case for Research on Smaller School Leadership*

The promise of small schools is exciting. Student achievement, especially among disadvantaged students, clearly increases in smaller school settings as do other indicators of

school effectiveness. Enormous resources have been dedicated to the process of creating small schools either from scratch or by converting large schools into smaller ones, and the information that has been produced by these efforts creates a strong base on which to build further studies in small school leadership. However, as Howley (2004) notes, “Because ‘not all small schools are successful’ (Darling-Hammond et al, list all in first citation 2002, p. 642), what it takes to *make* a small school successful becomes a compelling research question” (p. 10).

Several themes emerge from the literature. One is that the smaller the school, the more leadership needs to be shared among the staff. This idea has been around in education for quite a while in various iterations. SBDM is just one example of a reform effort that places the power of the school in the hands of the teachers. Raywid et al. (2003) also recognizes efforts to move power from the district to the school level, acknowledging that “the concept of shared decision making is linked occasionally to the idea of school-based management, but in practice, this idea rarely gets past a rhetorical mention” (p. 96).

Another theme, one that builds on the above, is the importance of a strong teacher community that displays a climate of trust, professionalism, collaboration, and collegiality. If the decision is to be in the hands of the teachers as a whole, then that whole should be cohesive and have a collective understanding of the vision and mission of the school. Small schools seem to be places where teacher collegiality, climates focused on professionalism, and strong instructional leadership develop and are nurtured.

A third theme, related to the second, is that the school needs to have a strong focus on instruction and its improvement. A school’s vision and mission are about teaching students well. Instructional leadership has a strong impact on the quality of instruction and, thus, on student

learning. This leadership should come not only from the administration, but also from the faculty.

Finally, the promotion of greater parent and student participation in school leadership could be an important aspect of creating more effective smaller schools. Parent leadership can take the form of serving on committees, working in classrooms, and, in the case of private schools, serving on the board of trustees. Student leadership can take the form of initiative on behalf of the student body, developing service-learning projects for the school, and taking their learning outside the classroom and into the community.

Future research could focus on a number of possible avenues of inquiry. One avenue could be the exploration of what principals, heads, and other administrative leaders can do to build these teacher leadership communities within small schools. Another avenue might follow teacher leadership communities and the building of models therein for better understanding and implementation. Another avenue could explore the participation of parents in school leadership. The study proposed here addresses all three of these possibilities. This study seeks to look at what each member of the school community does that is important for effective teaching and learning. Rather than examining roles, it focuses on specific actions and what the entire community believes is most important to an effective school. These actions are based in the current literature on leadership and are founded in the idea that leadership is a process of relationship, not a role of a single individual. This study seeks to connect the bits of learning about leadership that have cropped up in previous studies and begin to weave them into a coherent concept of smaller school leadership.

Smaller schools work. They work for students and for teachers. However, positive outcomes are not a sure thing. Change is difficult and educational reform efforts, even ones that

seem to be working well, have often fallen by the wayside because climates, cultures, policies, and people have been resistant to doing something different. Even for-profit companies and government agencies resist major changes in management practices and organizational models. If small schools are going to have the chance to prove their worth, reform advocates and supportive organizations need to provide schools with the knowledge and practices to ensure success. Leadership is the next area that should receive the focus of practitioners and researchers alike.

### Chapter III: Methodology

#### *Rationale for Research Method*

This study explores the question, “what are the characteristics of leadership specific to an effective smaller school as identified by leaders, staff, faculty, students, parents, and board members?” To answer this question, the study employs Q methodology, the heart of which is the Q-sorting technique. The primary text for reference in constructing this study is *Q Methodology* by McKeown and Thomas (1988). Q method, in short,

Entails a method for the scientific study of human subjectivity. Subjectivity, in the lexicon of Q methodology, means nothing more than a person’s communication of his or her point of view. . . . and it is at issue anytime an individual remarks, “It seems to me . . .” or “In my opinion . . .” In speaking thus, an individual is saying something meaningful about personal experience, and what Q methodology provides is a systematic means to examine and reach understandings about such experience. (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 12)

In this method, a Q-sample, consisting of a number of items, in this case, statements about small school leadership, is generated. For example, one item for this study is, “the head of school should provide coaching to help people do their work better.” The items are given to the participant for sorting, which results in a rank ordering according to a specific condition. In this case the condition is how important the participant thinks the statement is to an effective small school setting. Quantitative methods would then examine which statements receive the highest and lowest ranking. However, in this method, the researcher analyzes how statements are ranked, by either an individual or by groups of individuals, for patterns to support existing or emerging theories or models.

There are several reasons for employing Q methodology to study leadership in smaller schools. First, leadership is a concept with more than a single definition. There is no lack of theories, books, models, thoughts, ideas, perspectives, and opinions on the subject. There are also

many common understandings of leadership that range from traditional top-down, autocratic concepts with charismatic leaders-in-charge to more horizontal models where leadership is shared among a group of highly capable and collaborative people. This Q-method study examines the opinions of the members of the community and what they think members of the community should do in order for the school to be effective.

Second, studies of leadership and administration tend to focus on the actual head of school or on the principal. If teachers or others are queried about leadership, it is almost always about the behaviors of the person in charge. The literature on smaller school leadership has not included the impressions, ideas, and perspectives of faculty on leadership as a school-wide responsibility beyond their perceptions of the professional or collaborative culture. Nor has this literature included the perspectives of students, parents, or in the case of private schools, members of the boards of trustees. All of these groups would seem to have some important things to say about the topic. Q-method allows for the collection and comparison of data from these groups.

Third, research in smaller schools is challenging. Research done within single schools is almost always in the form of qualitative case studies. While this is informative, it limits the ability to create models that can be applied to other smaller school settings. In order to use common quantitative methods, either the entire population of a school or of several schools must participate in order to reach levels of statistical significance, or data regarding standardized test scores, demographics, etc. must be collected. Because Q-method does not require any particular sample size for statistical significance and because the Q-sort instrument can be applied to other school settings easily for comparison, it is a particularly effective method for use in smaller school research.

Q-method not only addresses these challenges, but also offers additional advantages. First, it allows for the development of a set of statements that go beyond the common general understanding of leadership and begins to address the specifics of smaller school leadership. The methodology uses the word *concourse* to identify the sources of the statements for a particular study. Concourse refers to the literature, letters, individual conversations, focus groups, or other written or verbal sources from which statements are generated. Based on the concourse around a particular issue, the Q-sort statements can be developed in order to infuse participants' instinctual perspectives with ones that may not necessarily be intuitive. Second, Q-method can be administered to any number of respondents without changing the Q-sort statements. This is advantageous in that not only the head of school or principal and teachers but also students, parents and other members of the school community will see and respond to the same statements. Typical quantitative survey methods of studying leadership often have a *leader* version and a *follower* version, creating an almost evaluative atmosphere. With Q-method, there is no right or wrong answer and no one is evaluated as having done well or not.

#### *Research Design*

The data collection was conducted in two stages: the Q-sort statement generation and the Q-sorting by participants. The Q-sort generation used a hybrid of methods. First, the literature on general leadership, school leadership, and smaller school leadership in urban U.S. schools was reviewed for statements regarding the topic. In addition, two focus group sessions, one with faculty and one with students, and one smaller conversation with members of the Board of Trustees, generated further items to include in the Q-sort. Q-method researchers refer to the first method as *ready-made* and the second as *naturalistic* (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 25).

Other research methods might be concerned with the validity of the statements generated in this manner. However, in Q-method this is not a concern. Because the intent of this study is to explore a possible foundation for a model of small school leadership, the use of both the literature and the focus groups and conversation ensures a wide variety of perspectives and ideas about what is important in small school leadership. Leading Q-method researcher Steven Brown stated in response to a question on this, “The key principle is representativeness; i.e., the statements should be representative and the participants should be also. Whether the P set includes persons who also generated the statements is of lesser concern” (2007, p. 1).

The Q-sort statements for this study were generated with the following guidelines:

1. Elements of the leadership models cited in the literature review form the initial basis for statement generation. This was followed by two focus group exercises and one less formal conversation to identify missing ideas or elements. These groups generated several more statements.
2. Statements were edited so that participants could sort them in response to the question of what they think is most important for a small school to be effective and what they think is most unimportant.
3. Statements that were too vague or that did not relate specifically to leadership of the school were not included. For instance, while instructional leadership is a main theme in the literature, the statement, “Teachers should build coherent programs across subjects (language arts, math, sciences, social studies, etc.) in any single grade level,” was excluded because it is not a direct leadership action, but a result of leadership.

4. Statements that duplicate ideas in more than one model were reduced to one statement. For instance, the idea that faculty should know and be committed to a common vision of the school appeared once.
5. Statements were constructed as simply as possible to increase clarity and allow for the same set to be used with both students and adults. For instance, instead of, “the head should provide clarity of vision for the school,” the statement became, “the head of school should clearly communicate the vision of the school.”
6. Statements were framed, whenever possible, as specific actions or behaviors in order to determine what people in smaller schools do in terms of effective leadership. For instance, instead of “the head of school believes everyone should be a leader,” the statement was, “the head of school should provide opportunities for teachers to take the lead on projects or programs.”
7. Statements were phrased, whenever possible, to avoid using the word “leadership.” For instance, instead of, “The head of school practices good leadership,” the statement was, “the head of school should provide coaching for people to do their work better.”
8. Statements were phrased in terms of what people in a school “should” do rather than what they already do. This phrase is more conducive to building models and allows participants to apply their thinking outside of their personal experiences to an ideal smaller school setting.

In the second phase, the Q-sorts were performed by individuals in the presence of the researcher who provided instruction and clarification and recorded the results. The participants sorted the statements according to a Likert-style scale of nine ratings ranging from +4 to -4. The

participants were only allowed to place a certain number of statements under each rating. The instruction to participants was to “sort the items according to those you think are most important to an effective small school (+4) to those you think are most unimportant (-4),” with a specific number of statements under each value heading (see *Research Protocols*). Results were analyzed in accordance with Q-method procedure (see *Data Analysis*).

As a part of this process a pilot study was also conducted, the purpose of which was several-fold. First, it allowed the researcher to become familiar with the process and refine instructions in order to facilitate the sorting process. Second, it allowed the researcher to refine the statements to make them clear and easy to understand. Third, it helped the researcher to develop a list of questions to use to help the participant think more about their sort. Fourth, it provided an initial collection of data that, while not proving definitive, offered some initial themes, ideas, and questions to explore in the data analysis and discussion of findings. The pilot study revealed that:

- The overall design of the study in terms of the participant’s process is sound.
- The wording on some statements needed refinement.
- The board of trustees as a group did not need to be represented as part of the leadership community within the sort statements. While their perspectives on smaller school leadership are important and were included in the concourse, the purpose of the board of trustees is not to provide program or instructional leadership for the school. The trustee responsibilities are primarily the fiscal stability of the school and the supervision of the head of school, much like the school district’s role in a public school setting.

## *Research Protocols*

### *Q-Sample Statements*

The leadership, school leadership, and smaller school literature offered a majority of the statements for the Q-sample. They came primarily from elements and models of transformational leadership, learning organizations, professional learning communities, and leadership capacity within schools.

According to McKeown and Thomas (1988), there are several possibilities of design of the Q-sample statements. An *unstructured sample* includes the statements that are simply taken from the discourse without attention to any categorization of the statements. *Structured samples* are more systematic in that the statements are assigned to conditions or categories defined by the researcher. For instance, a structured sample in this case might define statements either as actions or as beliefs and then apply those to heads of school, teachers, and parents. The result would be six different types of statements: head of school action, head of school beliefs, teacher actions, teacher beliefs, and so on. The researcher would then develop statements so that each category would contain the same number of statements. Structured samples can be of a *deductive design*, which is based on particular hypotheses or theories or of *inductive design*, which emerges as statements are generated. “The risk with unstructured samples is that some issue components will be under- or oversampled and, consequently, that a bias of some kind will be incorporated into the final q-sample” (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 28). However, the risk with structured statements is that statements that might not otherwise be there may be forced into development. The statements for this study did not constitute a structured format. However, care was taken to balance statements that referred to the head of school, faculty, students, and parents. There was not an even number of statements for each group, however, because that tended to force the

creation of statements that did not make sense. Instead, major ideas were represented as they applied to each group.

The statements for the Q-sample are as follows:

1. The head of school should challenge teachers and staff to do better work.
2. The head of school should coach people to improve their work.
3. The head of school should provide support, time, and resources for others to be leaders.
4. The head of school should help teachers work together.
5. The head of school should communicate with the teachers about what is important to the school.
6. The head of school should include the community in developing and refining the vision of the school.
7. The head of school should clearly communicate the vision of the school.
8. The head of school should be inspirational.
9. The head of school should question assumptions about how things should be done.
10. Teachers should explore the effectiveness of different teaching methods.
11. Teachers and staff should have opportunities to lead projects and/or programs.
12. Teachers should have the power to make decisions about curriculum.
13. Teachers should continually work to improve their knowledge and skills about teaching.
14. Teachers should take the lead in determining the methods and topics of instruction in the school.
15. Teachers and staff should respect each other.

16. Teachers should take time to talk with each other about students and teaching.
17. Teachers and staff should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions.
18. Teachers and staff should be dedicated to the learning of all students.
19. Teachers and staff should know and be committed to the vision of the school.
20. Teachers and staff should support the decisions of the head of school.
21. Teachers and staff should have input about major school decisions.
22. Teachers and staff should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others.
23. Teachers and staff should question assumptions about how things should be done.
24. Teachers should collaborate to improve the educational program.
25. Teachers and administration should be passionate about providing quality education.
26. Non-teaching staff should work with and get to know the students and parents.
27. People should take responsibility for their own actions and hold others accountable for their actions.
28. Teachers and staff should be committed to working together.
29. Parents should learn from each other.
30. Parents should continually work to improve their own knowledge and skills about parenting.
31. Parents should know and be committed to the vision of the school.
32. Parents should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others.
33. Parents should have opportunities to lead projects and/or programs.
34. Parents should support the decisions of the head of school.

35. Parents should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions.
36. Parents should be dedicated to the learning of all students.
37. Parents should have input into the educational program.
38. Students should take opportunities to lead when offered.
39. Students should be involved in addressing emerging issues in the student body.
40. Students should be provided with leadership opportunities as a part of the educational experience.
41. Students should learn from each other.
42. Students should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others.
43. Students should have input and influence on class curriculum.
44. Students should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions.
45. Students should know and be committed to the vision of the school.

The statements were printed on individual cards with the identifying numbers printed on the back. In one-on-one interviews each participant sorted the statements according to his or her opinion from what is most important in a small school setting to what is most unimportant. Even if the participant believed all of the statements are important, he or she sorted the statements relative to each other.

Once data were recorded, responses of participants were analyzed according to Q-method principles to find groups of participants who responded similarly. The data were then examined in order to uncover general themes. See *Data Analysis* for further explanation.

### *Interviews*

The following specific interview protocols were adapted from the recommended protocols described in *Q Methodology* (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). This is a detailed expansion of what is outlined above.

1. The researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study to the participants, emphasizing that their responses would be used to help determine what is most important for effective smaller schools. The term leadership was avoided in this discussion.
2. The participant was asked to review and sign a statement approved by the Antioch Institutional Review Board. It stated that the responses of individuals would be kept confidential and not included in the final report. In the case where students were interviewed, parents were also asked to review and sign a statement giving permission for their child's participation prior to the interview.
3. The participant was asked to read through the items and sort them into two piles: statements that are important and statements that are unimportant in smaller school settings. Participants often created a third middle pile.
4. The researcher placed the +4 and -4 markers on the table, spread some distance apart. The participant selected the three items that were most important and placed them vertically under the +4 marker. The order of the items under the markers was not important; all three items beneath the +4 marker received the same score.
5. The participant then placed the three most unimportant under the -4 marker.
6. Returning to the plus side, the participant chose four items judged to be important from the statements remaining but not as important as the three already set (located under +4),

and placed them under the +3 marker. The participant was free to switch statements under markers as the process continued.

7. The process was repeated on the other side, with the participant working toward the middle 0 position, until all of the Q-sort statements are positioned under markers distributed from -4 to +4. The reason for having participants work back and forth is to help them analyze the significance of each item in relation to the others.
8. Once completed, the Q-sort was reviewed, the participant making adjustments among items that, upon rearrangement, more accurately portrayed his or her beliefs.
9. Occasionally the participant altered the method to suit his or her personal style. However, the final result of the predetermined number of statements given each rating was insured.

The Q-sort was recorded by writing the item numbers on a score sheet that reproduces the Q-sort distribution. When the data were prepared for analysis, the statements for each rank were given the same value. Thus, in a continuum ranging from -4 to +4, each item under -4 received a 1, those under -3 were given a 2 and so forth to +4, which was scored 9. Some demographic data was also included on the score sheet.

Participant Response Sheet								
Most important in effective small schools			Neutral			Most unimportant in effective small schools		
+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4
20	6	30	19	28	25	4	32	22
17	7	13	29	9	21	39	26	31
8	18	2	44	14	37	15	38	5
	35	36	3	40	10	41	16	
		24	45	11	1	33		
			34	27	42			
				43				
				23				

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: Ruby Shama h Age: 36 Sex:  F  M

Faculty       Staff       Student Grade:  6  7  8       Parent       Board Member

Number of years with Billings: 3 Number of years (total) with (a) smaller school(s): 6

Notes:

*Illustration 3.1* Example of a completed participant response sheet

### *Selection of Participants*

Participants were drawn from the community of Billings Middle School, a single, private independent school located in Seattle, Washington. The school is approximately ten years old, having transitioned from The Intermediate School, which served students in grades four through six. The Intermediate School was founded by Luanne Billings as a small, student-focused school. It operated for nineteen years before changes in other private schools in the area required it to

either become a full elementary school or a middle school. The parents, board members, and faculty decided that it would be best to transition the school into a middle school that incorporated the same small community student-centered values as The Intermediate School. Luanne also agreed to see the school through its transition before she retired. She now serves on the Board of Trustees for Billings.

Billings Middle School was chosen for a number of reasons. First, it is by all definitions a smaller school. The student population at the time of the study was 84, and the grade levels were split into two sections, with a nearly equal number of boys and girls. It is also an urban, naturally small school with no designs to become a large one, though it is now in the process of adding one more section per grade level. The history of the school provides it with a strong sense of identity as a small school that understands and embraces the strengths of being so.

Billings Middle School is also highly functional in terms of leadership, climate, and teacher satisfaction. This was determined in part by a study that examined the intersections of transformational leadership, organizational health, and teacher empowerment within the Billings faculty (Sharp, 2005). Sharp employed three surveys administered to faculty and administration. They were the MLQ-5x (Avolio & Bass, 2004), the Organizational Health Inventory–Middle Level (OHI-ML) (Hoy & Hannum, 1997), and the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) (Short & Rinehart, 1992). All three of these surveys have been used in previous school-based studies. High scores in transformational leadership, organizational health, and teacher empowerment have been correlated to higher levels of student achievement as well as other indicators of effective schools. Billings Middle School performed exceedingly well on all measurements. Illustrations 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 show the averaged scores on each factor of these three surveys.

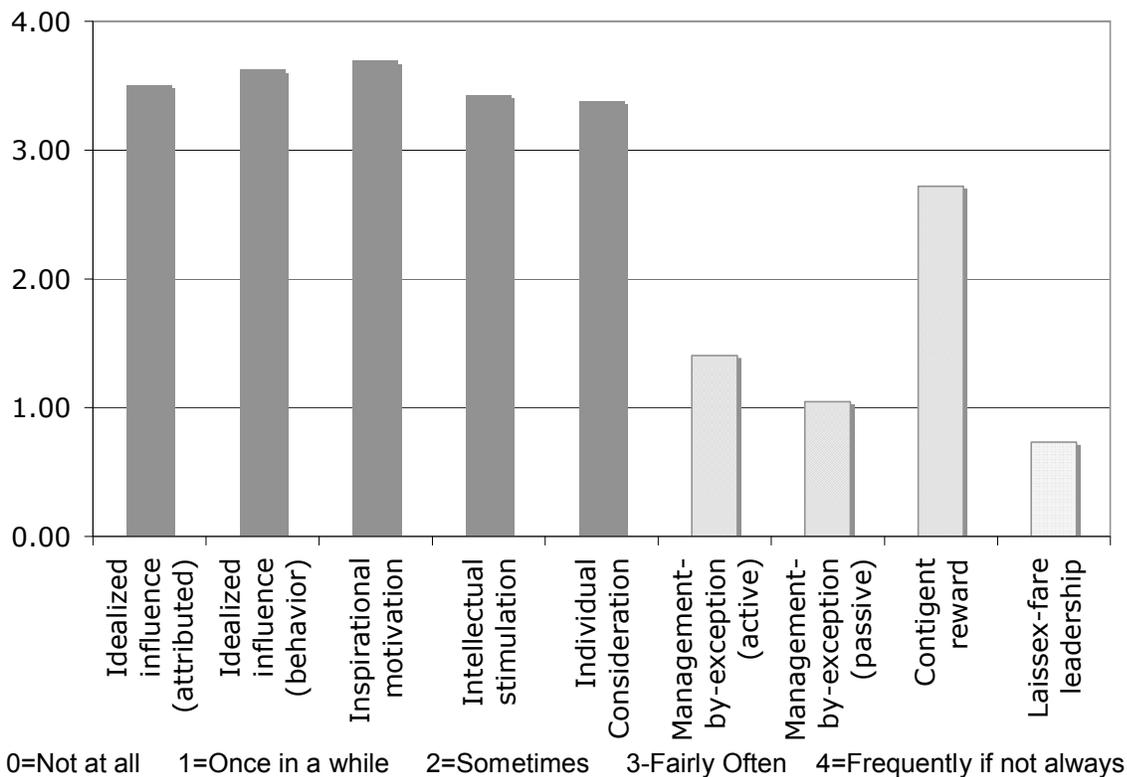


Illustration 3.2 MLQ-5x scores for Billings Middle School, Spring, 2005

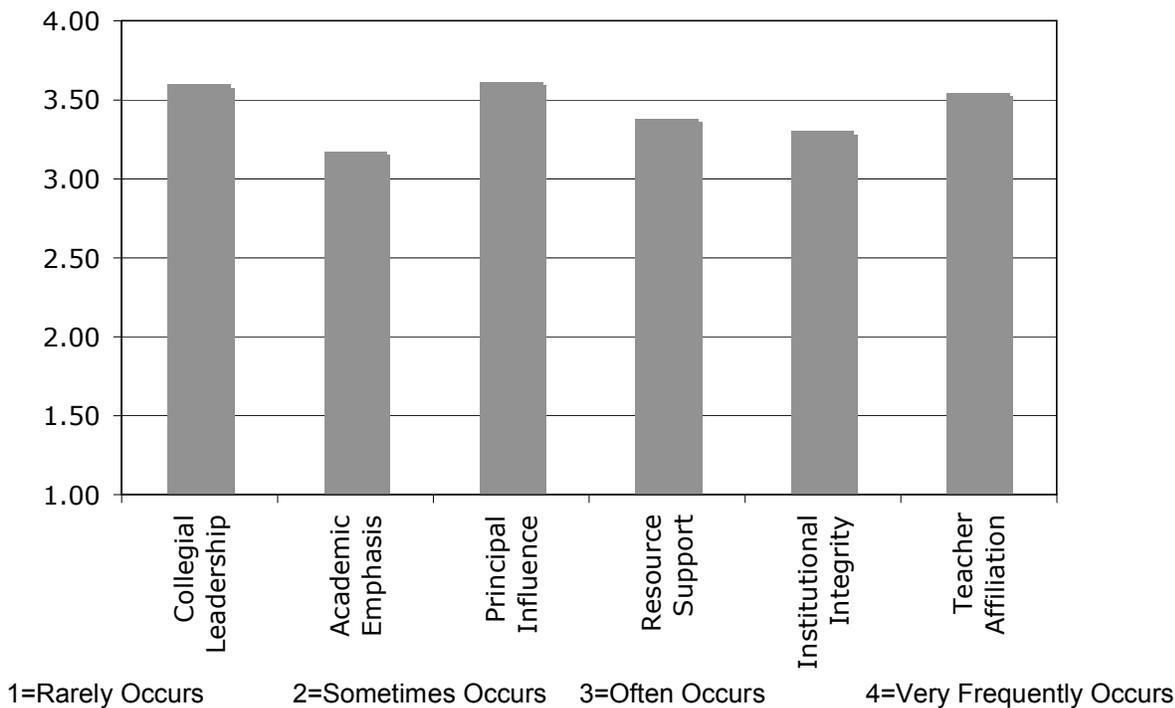
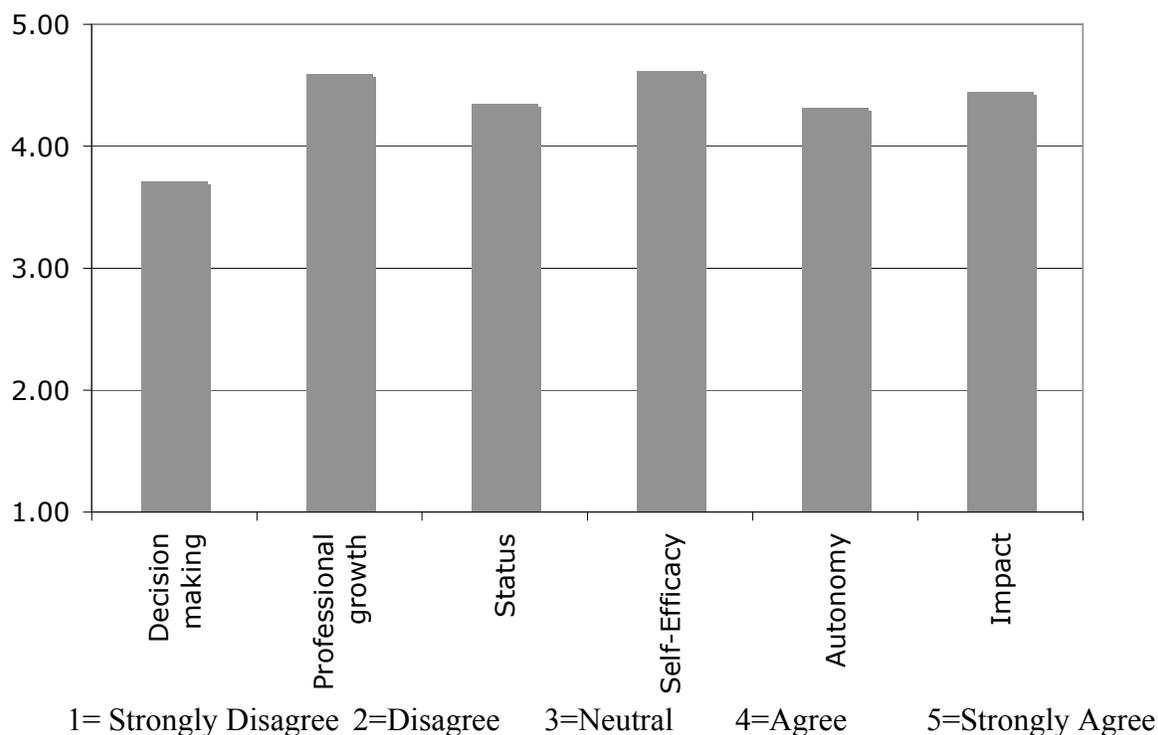


Illustration 3.3 OHI-ML scores for Billings Middle School, Spring, 2005



*Illustration 3.4* SPES scores for Billings Middle School, Spring, 2005

These results show that Billings is a highly functional school in terms of these measurements. The faculty survey results from the MLQ-5x indicate that the types of leadership most often experienced in the school are those associated with transformational leadership, less often with transactional leadership, and very little with laissez-faire leadership. The OHI-ML registers high scores for all factors of organizational health. Incidentally, Billings scored in the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile on three factors and in the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile in the other three compared to the large sample of New Jersey schools used to create and test the instrument. The SPES shows that all six factors are rated above neutral and most factors are rated at a high level, indicating that teachers are empowered and supported in their work. The combination of the data from these surveys suggests that both leadership by the head of school and the culture of leadership among the

faculty are strong and healthy. Thus, Billings is a particularly appropriate choice of environment in which to begin to build a model of effective school leadership.

As stated in the protocols, participants signed a consent form indicating that they understood the implications of participating. Students who were selected to participate also had a permission form signed by a parent prior to participation. Ethical concerns were few as participants were giving their opinions about leadership in any small school, not specifically Billings. Nothing came up in interviews that presented a problem to the researcher or the participants. Participants were informed in the consent form and at the beginning of the interview that the researcher would make every effort to keep individual responses confidential and that individual responses would not be discussed in the final report.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

Q-sort statements were created from the concourse and were derived from both the literature and from the three faculty, student, and board member group sessions. The student group was assembled by asking for volunteers. The purpose of the group process was to explore the topic of leadership in smaller school settings in order to determine if any concepts or perspectives were missing from the Q-sort statements generated from the literature. The nominal group technique (NGT) was used in the sessions with teachers and students. The session with board members did not have enough participants required to conduct the technique. It was intended that this session would be conducted during a regular board meeting, but ended up being scheduled just prior to a meeting. The board was dealing with an unexpected challenge and meeting time had to be dedicated to that issue. Board members who came early participated in a less formal discussion that was conducted and recorded instead of the intended NGT.

A proven group meeting technique, NGT facilitates the generation of a list of ideas or statements about a particular topic. It was first developed in 1968 by André L. Delbecq and Andrew H. Van de Ven and has been used extensively in a variety of studies and other applications by many different types of organizations including business and education. Van de Ven and Delbecq (1974) outlined the process with the following steps:

- (a) Individual members first silently and independently generate their ideas on a problem or task in writing.
- (b) This period of silent writing is followed by a recorded round-robin procedure in which each group member (one at a time, in turn, around a table) presents one of his ideas to the group without discussion. The ideas are summarized in a terse phrase and written on a blackboard or sheet of paper on the wall.
- (c) After all individuals have presented their ideas, there is a discussion of the recorded ideas for the purposes of clarification and evaluation.
- (d) The meeting concludes with a silent independent voting on priorities by individuals. (p. 606)

The faculty and student group sessions followed these procedures. The initial discussion offered an idea of leadership as a process rather than a role and included Lambert's (2003) assumption that "everyone has the right, responsibility and capability to be a leader" (p. 4). Following this, participants were asked, as step (a) from the procedures above instructs, to list what people do in a small school that makes the school most effective at teaching and learning. These sessions and the board of trustees' conversations provided additional statements to those already generated from the literature.

After Q-sort statements were generated, Q-sorts were performed in one-on-one interviews with the participant and researcher. The interviews were digitally recorded so that the researcher could focus on the participant and the process. "There are many features to this subtle matter, but the bottom line is that meanings are not to be found solely in the categorical cogitations of the observer, but as well (and even more importantly) in the reflections of the

individual as he or she sorts the statements in the context of a singular situation” (Brown, 1991, pt. 3 ¶ 7).

## Chapter IV: Findings

### *Organization of Chapter*

This chapter describes the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Q method is primarily a quantitative method, but the manipulation of the data relies on the judgments, perspectives, and hunches of the researcher. Therefore, the impressions given during the interaction between the researcher and the participants are important to the process. In this study, the interviews were recorded in order to help with the factor rotations and analysis. However, given the resulting data, the researcher used the comments and trends that appeared in the interviews to shed more light on the results instead of helping to guide the factor rotations. In this chapter, the data regarding the participants and the interviews are presented first. Second, the initial data from the Q-sorts are laid out. The analytic procedures and factor rotations are described in depth due to the fact that Q method varies somewhat from more common statistical methods. Third, the resulting rotated factors are presented and discussed in terms of strength, characteristics, similarities, and differences.

### *The Participant Sample*

The 51 participants in this study were the head of school, all full- and part-time faculty and staff, a sample of twelve students, a sample of eight parents, and all board members. The group of students comprised four randomly selected students from each of the three grades, two boys and two girls. The group of parents included those most closely involved with the school, the parent association members, two for each grade, a chair and co-chair, for a total of eight. In one case the selected parent was not available for the study and a replacement whose child was in the same grade as the non-participating parent and who was also deeply involved with the school was chosen. The demographics are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Demographics of Participants*

	Adults				Students			Total
	Staff	Faculty	Board	Parents	6 <sup>th</sup> gr.	7 <sup>th</sup> gr.	8 <sup>th</sup> gr.	
N	6	14	11	8	4	4	4	51
Age 11					1			1
Age 12					2	1		3
Age 13					1	2		3
Age 14						1	4	5
Ages 20-35	2	4						6
Ages 36-50		5	1	5				11
Ages 51-65	4	5	10	3				22
Male	2	5	5	3	2	2	2	20
Female	4	9	6	6	2	2	2	31
Average # years at Billings	4.3	3.9	5.2	2.5	1	2	3	4
Average # years in small schools	7.3	10.9	9.9	7.8	4	4	3	9
Current Parents		1	3	8				12
Alumni Parents	1	1	6					8

*Qualifications of Adult Participants*

The adult participants of the study as a group have a strong sense of the history of the school and a deep connection to its community. This group included a broad historical perspective in that several parents and teachers had been present from the first years of Billings as a middle school and even a few parents who had seen the school through its transition from The Intermediate School to the middle school it now is. The two board members who are not current or alumni parents of students at the school have also known Billings since the early days of its transition. Current board members, teachers, and parents who had not seen the school through that transition had participated in the recent self-study the school underwent as part of the accreditation process.

The adult participants also included everyone who is involved in the leadership of the school. All part- and full-time faculty and staff and board members participated in the study, and the parents were either representatives of the Parent Association or, in one case, a parent who was deeply involved with the life of the school. All of the adult participants are committed to the success of the school. All have chosen to be a part of a small school community. All had, at the time of the study, been involved with the school for at least a year and many for several years.

The demographic data were collected in order to provide potential additional information regarding the factors resulting from the data analysis. However, because the results provided only a single strong factor, the demographics are important in another sense. The demographic data show that this group of people is particularly dedicated to small schools in general and Billings in particular. The board consists primarily of current and alumni parents who show their dedication to the idea of a smaller school with their commitment of time and energy. The faculty and staff have spent, on average, half of their total working years in smaller schools or at Billings. Parents also show that on average they have been involved in and appreciate smaller schools and thus have chosen to continue their students' education at Billings.

#### *Qualifications of Student Participants*

While students are more immersed in the philosophy of the school than they are in the process of creating it, having their views represented equally in the data was an intentional choice. Again, because the data analysis revealed a single strong factor regarding what is effective leadership for small schools, the students' participation served to further strengthen this finding. The students, who are experiencing the effects of the combined leadership in the school more directly than anyone else, express very similar ideas in terms of what effective leadership

is. Simply put, student participation strengthens the findings in a way that could not be done with only adult participation.

### *Interviews*

The interviews reveal some common themes, statements, and questions expressed by the participants that serve to further shed light on the interpretation of the factor rankings. The strongest by far was the opinion that all of the statements were important to effective small schools. Another was that parents, particularly at the middle school level, did not have as much of an impact or did not need to provide as much in terms of leadership to the school in order for it to be effective. Third, there were several statements that drew very similar comments and questions by both students and adults and deserve some attention here.

### *Importance of Statements*

When the data analysis revealed a single strong factor that completely overshadowed the others, one question that came up was whether or not the statements were such that only one sort was possible. When the statements were developed, they came from several sources including multiple leadership models as well as several focus groups. Care was taken to ensure that the widest variety of perspectives was represented. In addition, statements were all framed in a positive voice in order to make the sorting process as varied as possible. For instance, the statement, “The head of school should be inspirational” could have been expressed as, “The head of school need not be inspirational.” If it had been, most participants would have probably placed it much lower in the sort no matter how important they think the inspirational qualities of the head of school are to overall school effectiveness. By framing all statements in a positive voice participants were forced to more deeply consider what they thought was most important.

Another ramification of the opinion of participants that all the statements have importance is that the ideas presented in current theories of both leadership in general as well as school leadership are pertinent to small school leadership. In other words, it is no surprise that the ideas at the heart of shared leadership, staff leadership, transformative leadership, etc., make sense to those involved in leading and learning in a small school community. What is interesting is that the ideas that came up in the focus groups, above and beyond those presented in the current literature, were considered just as important. Current leadership theory is on the right track, but it might be missing an important concept or two specific to smaller school settings.

#### *Parent Involvement*

In private schools the idea of parent involvement is often complicated. Parents in private schools often have more resources than parents in public schools and thus have more time, energy, and knowledge to devote to the education of their child. This is not to say that public school parents ignore their children's education. However, private school families, even those who receive financial aid, have at least some financial ability to pay tuition and are thus, on average, at a higher socio-economic level than the average public school family. In the best-case scenario, private school parents who take advantage of these resources and become involved in their child's education are a boon to the school in that they give their time and energy in support of the school. In the worst-case scenario they and the school find themselves in conflict over curriculum, methods, grades, and other decisions that affect their children.

In the interviews, every adult who commented on the fact that they were placing statements regarding parents lower than anything else did so in an apologetic way. What was most interesting about this was that parents did so as much as faculty, staff, and board members. A typical comment was, "Well, I think all these statements are important, but I tended to put

parents down here (at the lower end of the sort) because they are not as involved in the daily life of the classroom.” While this does not necessarily negate the ideas presented in Lambert’s (2003) work regarding strong parent involvement and leadership capacity in schools, it does help put it into perspective in this particular setting. There were also several parent participants who acknowledged that part of the reason for placing parents lower in the sort was that middle school is the beginning of the time for a decreased presence of the parent in the daily life of their child. They recognized that their children are at an age when they may need more space and a chance to practice independence, and thus, as parents, they pulled back from the level of school involvement they might have had at the elementary level.

#### *Participant Response to Individual Statements*

Several comments attracted the attention of the participants. When more than one participant made a similar comment on or asked a similar question about a particular statement it was noted for discussion below. What follows are summations of the comments and questions about individual statements.

*“Teachers and staff should support the decisions of the head of school.”* and *“Parents should support the decisions of the head of school.”* Both of these statements attracted similar questions and comments, though most were made about the first one. Those comments focused on what it meant to “support decisions.” Several participants (all adults) said that they would rate it higher if it meant that “supporting” also included questioning the decision when necessary. To unequivocally support all decisions of the head of school was not considered good for the effectiveness of smaller schools. However, many participants also followed this up with the statement that to continually question the head of school, especially publicly, could be destructive to the culture of the school. On two occasions the researcher was asked to further clarify the statement. In this case the researcher instructed the participants to place it where they wanted to but to explain their thinking. In both cases the participant placed it lower stating that it sounded to them like the statement was saying that all decisions should be supported.

*“Parents should be dedicated to the learning of all students.”* Participants often rated this lowest in relationship to all other statements in general and to parent-focused statements in particular. They also commented that a parent’s first responsibility and concern should be the learning process and experience of their child.

*“Students should take opportunities to lead when offered.”* Several adult participants made the comment that while it is important that students be offered leadership opportunities, the idea that they should always take the opportunities is not in line with the educational philosophy of the school. They stated that it is the school’s work to help students prepare to take on leadership and encourage that, but not to force it on the students.

*“Students should have input and influence on class curriculum.”* Several faculty participants stated that students should have influence on the curriculum especially in that teachers should be responsive to the needs and interests of the students, but that this statement and the way it is worded indicated to them a greater degree of control over the curriculum by students than they thought was appropriate. Thus they rated it lower than they would otherwise.

*“The head of school should include the community in developing and refining the vision of the school.”* When questioned by participants as to what was meant by “community,” i.e., whether it referred to the school community or the greater community, the researcher replied that it was the school community. This question probably came out of the fact that the school is located in the center of a very active retail and residential area as well as a block away from one of the most heavily used public parks in the nation and is also very involved in being an active participant in the neighborhood and its various organizations. However, the clarification by the researcher that the statement referred to the tighter school community always caused the participant to place the statement higher in their sort. Sometimes they followed this with a comment that indicated that the more immediate school community should be responsible for refining a vision that was responsive to the greater community, but that it could not effectively be all things to all people.

#### *Participant Characteristics for Factors*

Factor A is the dominant factor in the data analysis. As previously stated, 43 sorts loaded significantly on Factor A, representing 77% of the total number of participants. Breaking this down into groups, 81% of board members, 90% of the faculty, 100% of the parents, and 75% of the students loaded significantly on Factor A. The sort that loaded significantly on Factor D was by a student. The sorts that loaded significantly on Factors H and I were by board members. The

sort that was confounded on Factor A and another factor, and thus excluded from the data analysis, was by a faculty member. Those sorts that did not load significantly on any factor were by two staff members and two students. For the three sorts that only loaded on one factor, the one sort that was confounded, or the four sorts that did not load on any factors, demographic data cannot be revealed in order to protect the promise of anonymity given to participants.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis in this study occurred in four major steps: correlation, factor analysis, factor rotation and scoring, and interpretation. PCQMethod software (PCQM), created for the purpose of conducting Q-method studies, was used for data analysis in this study.

#### *Correlation*

Correlation in Q-method refers to the correlation of participants rather than items. The correlation between participants was calculated by determining the difference in scores of sort items, squaring the differences and summing them, dividing that by the sum of squares of the items for each participant, and subtracting that from zero. Or,  $r = 1 - (\text{sum of squared differences of scores} / \text{sum of squared scores per participant})$ . As Brown (1991) explains,

Just as a perfect positive correlation is registered as +1.00, a perfect negative correlation is -1.00, and so the correlation . . . of  $r = -0.67$  indicates a quite high level of disagreement, the statements which the one embraces tending to be the ones which the other rejects, and vice versa. (pt. 5 ¶ 5)

A correlation matrix was then created of all participants in preparation for factor analysis and rotation.

#### *Factor Analysis*

In more common factor analysis, factors are generated from the correlational matrix until all variance has been accounted for. In Q-method, however, the generally accepted number of

factors deemed necessary for judgmental rotation is seven. In this study, fifteen factors were originally generated in order to ensure that the data were thoroughly mined. These were generated using the centroid method, commonly used in Q-method.

Following the initial generation of factors, the number of factors to use in factor rotation was determined. There are three common methods used to determine the number of factors used in judgmental rotation. "Perhaps the most widely used method to determine the number of factors is to extract the number which have eigenvalues in excess of 1.00" (Brown, 1980, p. 222). In this study the first nine factors had eigenvalues greater than 1.00. "Another method for determining the number of factors is to accept those that have at least two significant loadings" (Brown, 1980, p. 222). This study used the highest level of significance ( $p < .01$ ) in order to determine the factors for rotation. By this method the first five factors would qualify. Third, "Humphrey's rule (Fruchter, 1954: 79-80) states a factor is significant if the cross product of the two highest loadings (ignoring sign) exceeds twice the standard error..." (Brown, 1980, p. 223). In this study only the first factor met this criteria. Table 4.2 displays the nine unrotated factors selected for judgmental rotation based on the eigenvalue method.

Table 4.2

*Unrotated Factor Matrix*

Q-Sort	Factor									h2
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
1	0.43 *	0.00	-0.28	0.14	0.42 *	-0.16	0.17	0.09	0.23	0.57
2	0.61 *	0.04	0.25	0.03	-0.24	-0.28	0.02	-0.04	0.13	0.59
3	0.62 *	0.18	-0.30	0.25	0.03	-0.09	-0.12	-0.24	-0.16	0.68
4	0.43 *	-0.32	0.04	-0.34	0.07	-0.11	-0.19	0.03	0.13	0.48
5	0.44 *	0.08	0.24	-0.17	0.09	-0.10	-0.04	-0.08	-0.11	0.32
6	0.84 *	0.27	0.02	0.12	0.04	-0.03	0.06	0.15	-0.01	0.82
7	0.72 *	0.31	-0.25	0.10	0.12	-0.04	0.15	-0.05	0.03	0.73
8	0.71 *	0.05	-0.12	0.11	-0.26	-0.12	-0.26	-0.15	-0.04	0.71
9	0.67 *	0.21	0.13	-0.05	0.07	-0.07	0.25	-0.15	0.12	0.62
10	0.39 *	0.10	-0.28	0.06	-0.34	-0.16	0.09	-0.13	0.18	0.44
11	0.64 *	0.15	0.18	-0.15	0.02	-0.11	0.11	-0.30	0.17	0.63
12	0.40 *	-0.16	-0.08	0.10	0.41 *	-0.28	-0.16	-0.03	0.01	0.48
13	0.65 *	-0.08	0.20	-0.28	-0.11	-0.10	0.12	0.19	-0.01	0.62
14	0.70 *	-0.14	-0.02	-0.15	-0.03	-0.27	-0.11	0.15	0.05	0.64
15	0.35	-0.04	-0.41 *	-0.19	-0.04	-0.17	-0.18	-0.15	-0.02	0.41
16	0.63 *	-0.14	0.21	0.27	-0.24	-0.26	0.00	0.10	0.07	0.67
17	0.37	-0.55 *	-0.07	-0.06	0.13	-0.34	-0.14	0.18	-0.04	0.63
18	0.63 *	-0.31	0.05	0.23	-0.05	-0.10	-0.03	-0.35	-0.01	0.68
19	0.76 *	0.27	0.12	0.20	0.00	0.02	-0.06	-0.20	-0.09	0.76
20	0.63 *	-0.22	0.07	0.15	-0.23	-0.16	-0.20	0.20	-0.23	0.68
21	0.46 *	0.08	-0.43 *	-0.11	0.09	0.25	0.09	-0.08	-0.23	0.55
22	0.77 *	-0.20	-0.08	0.06	0.13	-0.07	0.03	-0.02	-0.25	0.73
23	0.33	-0.01	-0.22	0.12	-0.55 *	0.11	0.10	0.26	0.09	0.57
24	0.59 *	0.51 *	-0.15	-0.08	-0.09	0.13	0.05	-0.13	0.17	0.71
25	0.54 *	0.22	0.08	0.03	0.14	0.16	-0.09	0.22	0.26	0.52
26	0.68 *	0.17	0.13	0.10	0.02	-0.08	-0.22	0.10	-0.04	0.59
27	0.82 *	0.24	-0.02	0.13	-0.10	0.23	-0.06	0.00	0.14	0.83
28	0.30	0.04	0.06	-0.36	-0.32	-0.03	-0.01	0.24	0.19	0.42

29	0.75 *	0.24	0.15	0.03	0.15	-0.16	0.05	-0.05	-0.19	0.73
30	0.52 *	0.46 *	0.13	-0.06	0.05	-0.08	0.25	0.14	0.16	0.62
31	0.59 *	0.41 *	0.13	0.12	0.28	0.10	0.10	0.28	-0.10	0.73
32	0.72 *	-0.10	-0.12	0.02	0.09	-0.03	0.15	0.13	-0.24	0.65
33	0.37	-0.13	-0.20	-0.16	-0.15	0.24	0.14	0.09	-0.22	0.38
34	0.56 *	-0.15	-0.23	0.17	0.18	0.36	0.12	-0.15	0.02	0.62
35	0.56 *	0.43 *	0.07	-0.03	0.08	0.07	-0.30	0.03	-0.28	0.68
36	0.48 *	-0.45 *	0.07	0.37	0.19	0.18	0.10	0.22	0.06	0.71
37	0.46 *	-0.43 *	0.10	-0.05	-0.15	0.10	0.15	-0.30	-0.23	0.61
38	0.53 *	0.50 *	0.26	0.09	-0.20	0.02	0.25	0.00	-0.06	0.71
39	0.61 *	0.13	0.18	0.24	0.24	0.19	-0.11	0.06	-0.15	0.61
40	0.50 *	-0.08	0.17	-0.14	-0.10	0.26	-0.25	0.03	0.09	0.45
41	0.49 *	0.03	-0.20	-0.40	0.00	-0.06	0.00	0.08	-0.13	0.47
42	0.36	-0.09	0.28	-0.21	-0.13	0.28	0.28	-0.07	-0.03	0.44
43	0.08	-0.21	-0.13	0.07	-0.43 *	0.21	-0.18	-0.16	-0.03	0.36
44	0.67 *	-0.28	-0.07	-0.11	0.11	0.08	0.21	0.09	0.23	0.67
45	0.60 *	-0.18	0.04	0.23	0.07	0.33	-0.12	0.10	0.23	0.64
46	0.44 *	-0.16	0.31	-0.26	0.27	0.25	-0.21	-0.19	0.12	0.61
47	0.42 *	0.17	-0.04	-0.20	0.23	0.08	-0.34	0.17	0.10	0.46
48	0.62 *	0.04	-0.31	0.00	-0.05	0.16	0.23	0.13	-0.17	0.61
49	0.35	-0.26	-0.13	0.13	0.16	-0.03	0.13	-0.07	0.28	0.35
50	0.46 *	-0.30	0.42 *	0.23	0.08	0.03	0.01	-0.36	0.07	0.67
51	0.34	-0.31	0.15	-0.35	0.00	-0.28	0.21	0.09	-0.28	0.57
Eigenvalues	16.13	3.23	1.93	1.70	1.95	1.58	1.32	1.36	1.24	30.44
% of variance	32	6	4	3	4	3	3	3	2	60

h2=communality (sum of squares of factor loadings by rows)

\*=p<.01

### *Factor Rotations and Factor Scores*

Factor rotations are conducted based on avenues of inquiry determined by the researcher. Brown (1991) states, “There is an infinite number of ways in which the factors can be rotated . . . and the investigator probes this space in terms of preconceived ideas, vague notions, and prior knowledge about the subject matter, but with due regard also for any obvious contours in the data themselves” (pt. 6 ¶ 9). In this case the ”obvious contour” was the large number of sorts that loaded significantly on the first factor and thus became the primary focus of factor rotation. Factors were rotated to clarify these unusual initial results, as the intent of the study was to begin to build a model for understanding leadership in smaller schools. Clarification entails rotating factors in order to decrease the number of sorts that either do not load on a factor or only load on one factor (confounded).

The ability to possibly reduce the unrotated factors to a single factor on which to focus interpretation was unexpected. In order to thoroughly explore the possibilities, a Varimax rotation was performed from the original factors. Manual rotation then followed to see if the resulting factors could be clarified. This served only to muddy the waters. Another attempt was made to ensure adequate exploration in which, after the manual rotations were performed on the original factors, all sorts that were confounded or did not load on a factor were discarded and the process run again. The results were virtually identical to those of the original process. While the resulting data are highly unusual in that they show a remarkable degree of agreement among the participants, it is also difficult to draw any other conclusion.

Table 4.3

*Rotated Factor Matrix*

Sort	Factors									h2
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
1	0.42 *	0.14	-0.36	0.14	0.24	-0.22	0.11	-0.30	-0.13	57
2	0.55 *	-0.27	0.18	0.10	0.05	-0.23	0.18	0.20	0.10	55
3	0.63 *	0.04	-0.07	-0.09	-0.16	-0.33	-0.21	-0.01	-0.28	66
4	0.46 *	-0.25	-0.11	-0.10	0.20	0.15	-0.05	-0.11	0.33	48
5	0.43 *	0.01	0.28	-0.07	0.14	-0.09	-0.04	-0.02	0.15	32
6	0.78 *	0.20	0.02	0.12	0.17	-0.25	0.05	0.20	-0.06	80
7	0.69 *	0.28	-0.11	0.11	-0.03	-0.36	0.00	0.01	-0.07	71
8	0.69 *	-0.22	-0.04	-0.08	-0.13	-0.20	-0.16	0.24	-0.09	68
9	0.66 *	0.10	0.20	0.23	0.00	-0.24	0.12	-0.09	0.09	62
10	0.38	-0.13	-0.21	0.06	-0.32	-0.28	0.12	0.17	0.05	43
11	0.64 *	-0.05	0.25	0.19	-0.06	-0.23	0.03	-0.15	0.18	62
12	0.39 *	-0.15	-0.13	-0.12	0.35	-0.19	-0.10	-0.31	-0.14	49
13	0.63 *	-0.03	0.11	-0.05	0.17	0.02	0.23	0.11	0.31	60
14	0.68 *	-0.19	-0.13	-0.15	0.25	-0.08	0.06	0.08	0.20	65
15	0.38	-0.08	-0.28	-0.24	-0.17	-0.19	-0.17	-0.04	0.14	40
16	0.60 *	-0.36	0.06	0.08	0.15	-0.10	0.27	0.26	-0.15	69
17	0.39 *	-0.37	-0.27	-0.33	0.33	0.12	0.14	-0.14	0.02	63
18	0.66 *	-0.37	0.08	0.01	-0.12	0.03	0.03	-0.13	-0.27	68
19	0.73 *	0.06	0.26	0.13	-0.02	-0.24	-0.15	0.10	-0.19	74
20	0.63 *	-0.25	-0.02	-0.26	0.17	0.05	0.09	0.34	-0.15	70
21	0.50 *	0.36	-0.18	-0.19	-0.23	0.02	-0.11	-0.07	-0.05	52
22	0.78 *	-0.01	-0.02	-0.22	0.12	0.02	0.07	-0.09	-0.17	71
23	0.30	-0.04	-0.28	0.08	-0.24	0.04	0.24	0.52	-0.01 *	56
24	0.54 *	0.28	0.00	0.28	-0.22	-0.33	-0.16	0.17	0.16	68
25	0.48 *	0.19	-0.08	0.34	0.27	-0.05	-0.11	0.17	0.08	51
26	0.64 *	-0.01	0.10	0.02	0.24	-0.19	-0.13	0.26	-0.03	59
27	0.79 *	0.13	-0.02	0.30	-0.04	-0.10	-0.13	0.26	-0.06	83
28	0.26	-0.06	-0.07	0.06	0.00	0.01	0.13	0.28	0.47	39
29	0.72 *	0.15	0.27	-0.08	0.18	-0.28	-0.01	0.00	-0.06	73
30	0.48 *	0.28	0.14	0.27	0.13	-0.35	0.14	0.13	0.19	61
31	0.52 *	0.47 *	0.14	0.14	0.37	-0.20	0.00	0.18	-0.09	74
32	0.72 *	0.17	-0.07	-0.21	0.12	0.00	0.17	0.02	-0.11	65
33	0.40 *	0.19	-0.12	-0.21	-0.18	0.27	0.11	0.12	0.04	38
34	0.56 *	0.19	-0.17	0.15	-0.13	0.19	-0.06	-0.18	-0.26	55
35	0.53 *	0.26	0.23	-0.12	0.15	-0.21	-0.37	0.26	0.00	68
36	0.48 *	-0.05	-0.17	0.17	0.28	0.37	0.20	-0.03	-0.37	68
37	0.53 *	-0.19	0.20	-0.19	-0.25	0.31	0.16	-0.13	-0.09	60
38	0.46 *	0.26	0.36	0.22	-0.04	-0.30	0.17	0.33	0.00	68
39	0.59 *	0.20	0.19	0.11	0.26	0.05	-0.19	0.08	-0.27	62
40	0.50 *	-0.07	0.07	0.12	0.05	0.26	-0.22	0.16	0.15	44

41	0.49 *	0.17	-0.12	-0.26	-0.03	-0.03	-0.01	0.01	0.32	45
42	0.39 *	0.13	0.28	0.14	-0.15	0.31	0.19	-0.01	0.19	45
43	0.12	-0.25	-0.09	-0.06	-0.36	0.25	-0.11	0.25	-0.07	36
44	0.69 *	0.00	-0.23	0.17	0.09	0.17	0.23	-0.16	0.14	69
45	0.56 *	-0.05	-0.15	0.35	0.14	0.25	-0.11	0.07	-0.18	60
46	0.47 *	-0.06	0.22	0.20	0.17	0.28	-0.30	-0.22	0.22	60
47	0.40 *	0.12	-0.12	0.04	0.30	-0.05	-0.34	0.07	0.22	45
48	0.63 *	0.33	-0.20	-0.12	-0.13	0.03	0.15	0.10	-0.07	61
49	0.36	-0.15	-0.26	0.20	0.03	0.03	0.13	-0.22	-0.11	33
50	0.48 *	-0.36	0.36	0.23	0.05	0.18	0.05	-0.21	-0.24	68
51	0.36	-0.09	0.15	-0.41 *	0.12	0.09	0.35	-0.14	0.26	56
Eigenvalues	15.52	2.19	1.78	1.78	1.84	2.15	1.4	1.79	1.72	30
% of variance	30	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	58

h<sup>2</sup>=communality

\*=(p<.01)

Table 4.3 shows that 43 sorts loaded significantly ( $p < .01$ ) on Factor A and one sort each loaded on Factors D, H, and I. Factors B, C, E, F and G contained no loadings significant at the .01 level. Sort 31 was confounded (Factors A and B) and sorts 10, 15, 43, and 49 did not load on a factor. The rotated factors account for 58% of the variance as compared to the original nine factors that accounted for 60% of the variance.

The final step in the data analysis is to determine factor scores for each item for each significant factor. “A factor score is the score for a statement as a kind of average of the scores given that statement by all of the Q sorts associated with the factor” (Brown, 1991, pt. 7 ¶ 1). Factor scores are determined by multiplying the score of an item in a particular Q-sort by the factor weight of that Q-sort on that particular factor, and then summing the products. The result is a model sort for that factor.

#### *Factor Ranking of Statements*

In Q-method, the final step in analysis is the generation of statement rankings according to each factor. This results in a sorting of statements similar to that of individual participants, but

representative of the perspectives of the participants that loaded on that factor as a whole, rather than any particular participant sorting. Usually, any factors that only have one sort that loads significantly are discarded. However, given the unusual nature of the resulting data with the overwhelming weight on one factor, the other three factors that contained a significant sort are included for the purposes of discussion. This means that the heavy majority of the school community members are in general agreement with the resulting ranking in Factor A.

Table 4.4 shows the ranking of the statements of each factor. They are listed according to the ranking of Factor A in order to facilitate discussion. Factor A was the dominant sort. Items with the same factor scores are listed in order of item number. For example, items 18, 22, and 25 all received the same factor score of 4. They are listed in numerical order within that score. While the calculations that determine the factor scores can further rank statements that received the same factor score, the method states that all items receiving the same factor score are considered of equal importance in the interpretation of the factor. This follows the instructions given to participants in that once they sort statements into factor scores, they do not need to further rank the statements within each score.

Table 4.4

*Ranking of Statements by Factor*

Statements in order of ranking in Factor A	Factors			
	A	D	H	I
18. Teachers and staff should be dedicated to the learning of all students.	4	-2	4	2
22. Teachers and staff should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others.	4	-3	2	3
25. Teachers and administration should be passionate about providing quality education.	4	-3	3	0
15. Teachers and staff should respect each other.	3	0	-1	1
16. Teachers should take time to talk with each other about students and teaching.	3	1	1	2
24. Teachers should collaborate to improve the educational program.	3	-1	2	0
40. Students should be provided with leadership opportunities as a part of the educational experience.	3	-2	0	1
8. The head of school should be inspirational.	2	3	1	-2
12. Teachers should have the power to make decisions about curriculum.	2	-1	0	-4
13. Teachers should continually work to improve their knowledge and skills about teaching.	2	0	1	4
19. Teachers and staff should know and be committed to the vision of the school.	2	2	-1	1
28. Teachers and staff should be committed to working together.	2	1	-2	2
7. The head of school should clearly communicate the vision of the school.	1	4	4	4
10. Teachers should explore the effectiveness of different teaching methods.	1	-4	0	3
21. Teachers and staff should have input about major school decisions.	1	-1	0	0
27. People should take responsibility for their own actions and hold others accountable for their actions.	1	-2	0	-1
39. Students should be involved in addressing emerging issues in the student body.	1	-4	2	-1
41. Students should learn from each other.	1	-1	1	2
3. The head of school should provide support, time and resources for others to be leaders.	0	0	-1	-1
5. The head of school should communicate with the teachers about what is important to the school.	0	1	3	0
6. The head of school should include the community in developing and refining the vision of the school.	0	4	2	-3
9. The head of school should question assumptions about how things should be done.	0	0	0	0
11. Teachers and staff should have opportunities to lead projects and/or programs.	0	0	-2	-2
14. Teachers should take the lead in determining the methods and topics of instruction in the school.	0	-3	-4	-3
17. Teachers and staff should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions.	0	1	0	1

23. Teachers and staff should question assumptions about how things should be done.	0	-2	-1	-3
31. Parents should know and be committed to the vision of the school.	0	3	3	0
1. The head of school should challenge teachers and staff to do better work.	-1	0	-4	0
2. The head of school should coach people to improve their work.	-1	0	-2	-2
4. The head of school should help teachers work together.	-1	0	-3	0
20. Teachers and staff should support the decisions of the head of school.	-1	0	-3	3
26. Non-teaching staff should work with and get to know the students and parents.	-1	-4	1	-2
42. Students should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others.	-1	-1	0	2
32. Parents should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others.	-2	-3	2	1
34. Parents should support the decisions of the head of school.	-2	-1	-4	3
38. Students should take opportunities to lead when offered.	-2	-2	-1	0
43. Students should have input and influence on class curriculum.	-2	3	-3	-1
44. Students should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions.	-2	1	-2	-2
30. Parents should continually work to improve their own knowledge and skills about parenting.	-3	2	1	4
33. Parents should have opportunities to lead projects and/or programs.	-3	4	-2	-4
35. Parents should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions.	-3	2	-1	-1
45. Students should know and be committed to the vision of the school.	-3	2	3	-3
29. Parents should learn from each other.	-4	1	0	-1
36. Parents should be dedicated to the learning of all students.	-4	2	4	1
37. Parents should have input into the educational program.	-4	3	-3	-4

### *Overview Description of Factor A*

Factor A is defined by a clear focus on the actions and attitudes of the faculty and staff as being the most important leadership elements for effective small schools. The majority of statements regarding faculty and staff show up in the top half of the sort. This is followed by a focus on the head of school, then students, and then parents. The top-ranked statements also focus on collective perspectives, such as being dedicated to the learning of all students and passionate about providing quality education. The statements regarding the head of school ranked highest focus on being inspirational and developing and providing vision for the school. The lowest ranked head of school statements focus on working with faculty in order to improve

their individual and collective work. Statements regarding parents do not appear in the ranking until the middle and then only state that they should be committed to the vision of the school. The lowest ranked items of all regard parental involvement in the educational programs and the learning of all students. Statements regarding students are dispersed throughout the ranking and, of these, the two highest ranked statements refer to providing students with leadership opportunities. The rest of the statements, ranking lower, focus on the leadership actions and perspectives of students. Thus, it could be argued that the two highest ranked statements referring to students actually refer to the actions of the teachers in that they are responsible for providing space in the school program for student leadership and the addressing of student issues.

#### *Overview Description of Factor D*

Factor D is not nearly so clear in its trends. Statements regarding parents are ranked much higher than in Factor A. Again, the statements regarding the head of school tend to fall in the middle of the ranking. Student statements tend to fall in the lower half of the ranking. Statements regarding teachers also tend to concentrate in the lower half of the ranking.

#### *Overview Descriptions of Factors H and I*

Factors H and I are also not as clear in their trends as Factor A. Trends are not evident in the ranking of statements. More information is revealed in the consensus and distinguishing statements listed below.

*Consensus Statements*

Table 4.5 shows the three consensus statements resulting from the factor analysis.

Table 4.5

*Consensus Statements Between Factors*

Statements	Factor Scores			
	A	D	H	I
3. The head of school should provide support, time and resources for others to be leaders.	0	0	-1	-1
9. The head of school should question assumptions about how things should be done.	0	0	0	0
17. Teachers and staff should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions.	0	1	0	1

Consensus statements are those that have similar rankings across all factors. In this study the three statements not only share similar rankings across factors, they also share similar rankings among each other. The four factors only agree on rankings of statements that they place in the middle of the ranks. All three of these statements speak to collegiality and shared leadership, which all factors place solidly in the middle of the rankings of the statements. Again, all statements are ranked relative to each other. Because of that it is impossible to say that all four factors give them the same level of importance. However, all four do give them more importance than roughly half of the other statements.

*Distinguishing Statements*

Table 4.6 shows the statements that distinguish each factor from the other three.

Table 4.6

*Distinguishing Statements Between Factors*

Statements that distinguish Factor A from other factors	Factor Scores			
	A	D	H	I
30. Parents should continually work to improve their own knowledge and skills about parenting.	-3	2	1	4
36. Parents should be dedicated to the learning of all students.	-4	2	4	1
Statements that distinguish Factor D from other factors				
33. Parents should have opportunities to lead projects and/or programs.	-3	4	-2	-4
37. Parents should have input into the educational program.	-4	3	-3	-4
43. Students should have input and influence on class curriculum.	-2	3	-3	-1
18. Teachers and staff should be dedicated to the learning of all students.	4	-2	4	2
22. Teachers and staff should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others.	4	-3	2	3
10. Teachers should explore the effectiveness of different teaching methods.	1	-4	0	3
Statement that distinguishes Factor I from other factors				
34. Parents should support the decisions of the head of school.	-2	-1	-4	3

*Distinguishing Statements for Factor A*

Distinguishing statements for Factor A seem to further highlight the relatively lower emphasis placed on parent leadership in the school. However, it is important to remember that the common comment regarding parents being dedicated to the learning of all students was that parents should be more concerned with the learning of their own children. Two factors placed each of these statements at the top of the ranking of importance, demonstrating the discrepancies in terms of importance of parent leadership among the factors. It is also important to remember here that the last three factors are each only represented by one participant. The overwhelming majority of participants placed these statements lower in the rankings.

*Distinguishing Statements for Factor D*

Distinguishing statements for Factor D demonstrate how different this Factor is from the others. For instance, this factor places several parent statements at the top of its ranking where the other factors rank them relatively low. It also gives student influence on class curriculum more importance and ranks several teacher statements much lower, in particular the statement regarding trying new methods.

*Distinguishing Statements for Factor I*

Factor I only has one distinguishing statement. That statement, that parents should support the decisions of the head of school, is interesting but does not provide enough information about the philosophy of that statement to make any meaningful observations.

*Summary*

In Q-method, it is customary to drop any factors that have only one significantly loaded sort. In this case, the three factors that had one sort were included for initial analysis due to the extremely unusual results of that analysis. Factor A was so heavily weighted with significant sorts that the inclusion of other factors was important in order to show what other perspectives were revealed in the analysis.

However, the lack of defined perspectives in the other three factors only served to highlight the strength of the perspective exhibited in Factor A. Not only was there a large number of sorts that loaded significantly on that factor, there was also a clearer grouping of types of statements within the factor's ranking of statements. Also, the participants responsible for the single sorts that loaded on the factors other than Factor A, a student and two board members, could be considered further from the day-to-day leadership than most of those who loaded on Factor A. The board members, especially those who come from backgrounds other than

education, bring significantly different perspectives to their work with and understanding of what makes for effective education. The students, especially given their ages, may be in very different places in their ability to reflect on how they and others influence school leadership.

This is not to say that their perspectives are not important. In fact, there is a case to be made that a diversity of perspectives is important in the functioning of any small organization, and that those perspectives help strengthen the ability of the organization to think differently and creatively about how it approaches problems and challenges. However, in this case, where the intent of this study is to establish a place from which to begin building a model for small school leadership, the strength of the findings concerning Factor A cannot be ignored. For this reason, the discussion will focus solely on Factor A and what it means for effective small school leadership.

## Chapter V: Discussion

### *Organization of the Chapter*

Factor A will be the focus of this chapter. First, the school's current state in terms of its development and growth will be discussed in order to set the stage of the findings. Second, the characteristics of the ranking of statements as offered by the factor will be identified and discussed. Third, a number of influential factors of this particular school setting will be investigated in order to further probe the factor for meaning. Fourth, an initial model for small school leadership will be offered. Finally, limitations for this study and recommendations for further study will be presented. This discussion rests on the understanding that this is a limited initial probe into what is important for small school leadership and is intended as a starting place, not a final word, on what is important to realize the promise of smaller school settings.

### *Developmental Phase of the School*

This school is both ten and thirty years old. As previously discussed, Billings was originally established as The Intermediate School serving grades four through six. Ten years ago, due to changes in school structures throughout Seattle, the school transitioned into a middle school, serving grades six through eight. Several of the current board members are parents of Intermediate School alumni and the founder, Luanne Billings, for whom the current school is named, also serves on the board of trustees.

This is important to the discussion of the data for two reasons. One, the school is at an important developmental phase, becoming established in its new identity as a middle school and enjoying an expanding reputation for excellence throughout the city and the region. As such it has also been working in recent years to better define itself, both in terms of marketing and by

entering into the process of becoming formally accredited (the school completed a self-study in the year previous to this study and underwent an accreditation visit at the beginning of the school year in which this study took place). Two, the parent body has been central to the development of the school not only in that parents made the decision to transition to a middle school but in the level of involvement parents have had in helping the school become more secure. In addition, the parents who participated in the study have a dual role of being both the parent of a child in the school and being a locus of communication between the greater parent body and the faculty and administration. Thus, the identity of Billings Middle School has been a major focus of not only the faculty and administration, but also the parent community, since the transition.

It could be said that Billings itself is at an early adolescent phase in terms of its organizational development. The school spent its early years figuring itself out and building an identity for itself as an organization. In more recent years, it has been working to define a role for itself in terms of the communities of which it is a part. The last five years has seen the development of a new mission and vision statement, a new strategic plan, and new marketing materials including a website and a brochure type booklet called a view book. Most recently, Billings underwent an extensive self-study, a year-long project where the school responds to questions concerning everything from emergency procedures to overall curriculum philosophy. Because of these activities there have been many discussions, both formal and informal, between administration, faculty, students and parents about the identity of the school, about what makes it so effective, and what can be done to increase its effectiveness.

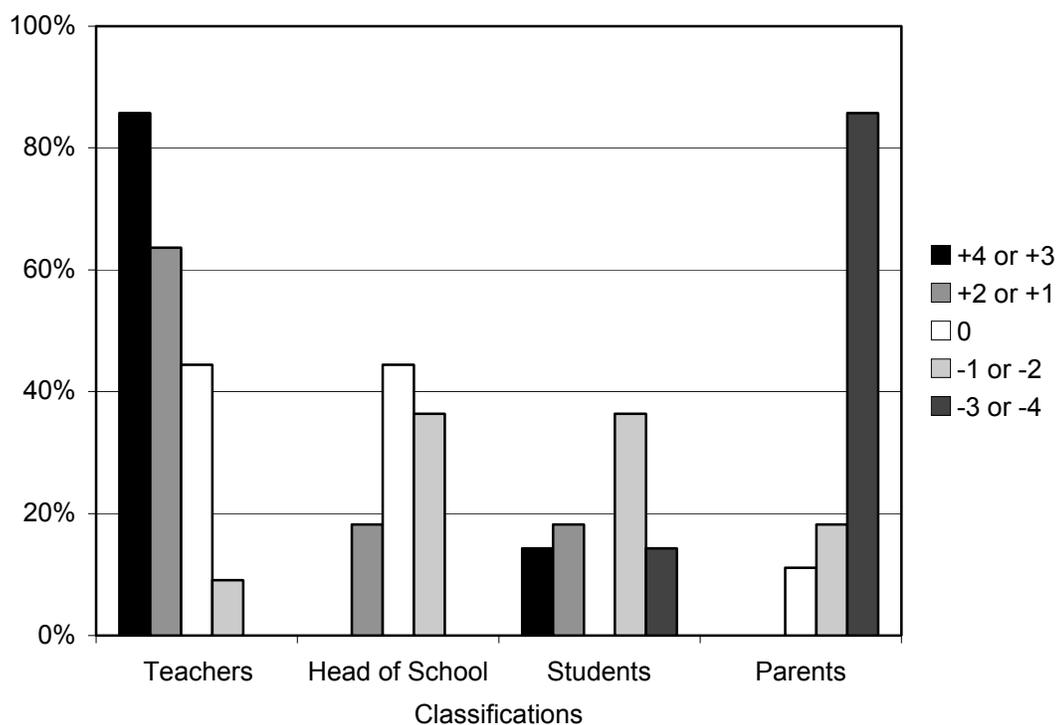
In this study the parents who were selected to participate were the grade level representatives and co-chairs for the parent association. In this role they are primarily responsible

for organizing the parent body around the volunteer needs of the school. For instance, a faculty member or administrator will need parent support for a particular program and the parent representatives will organize the parents. In addition, the parent representatives are often the first point of contact for a parent who has an issue or problem with the school or its programs. As such, they are more involved in the day to day operations of the school than are most parents and they have more contact with school employees, particularly administration. Parents in general have also been very involved in the school both before and after its transition into a middle school. From helping find, renovate and care for the current permanent facility to serving on the board, parents have been deeply involved in supporting the school during the first ten years of its growth and development.

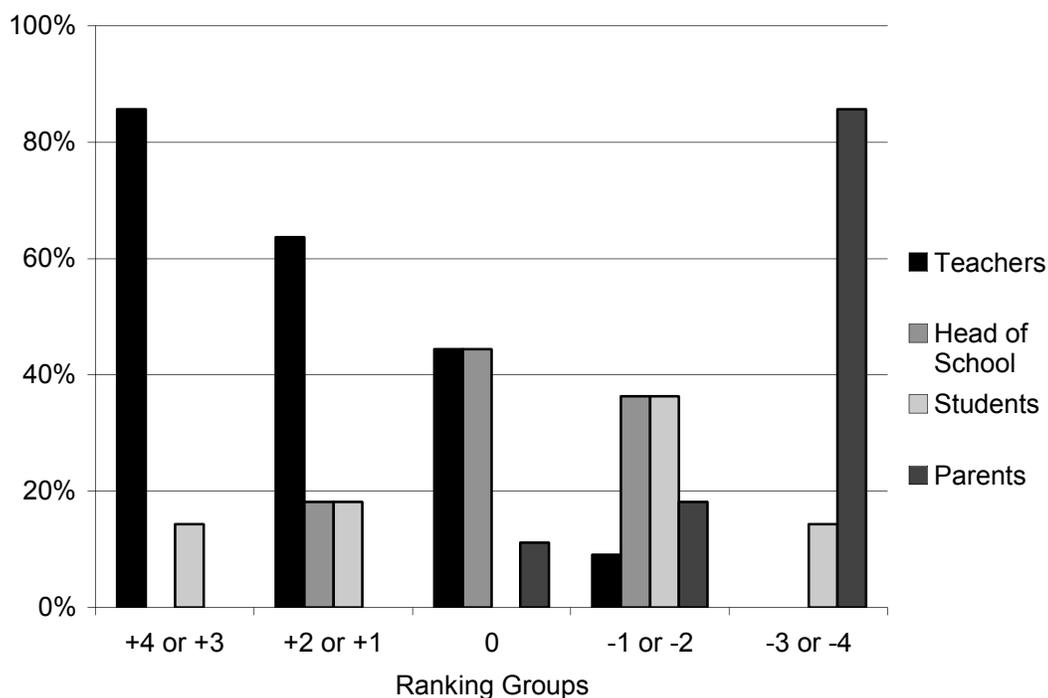
In one respect, these two characteristics, that the school as a whole has been consciously defining and communicating its identity and that the parent body has been deeply involved in the development of the school, could explain some of the high degree of consensus among the study participants about what is important to leadership in an effective small school. It would make sense that those that have shared in this experience would come to think in a similar way about how a smaller school should be. However, it is also important to note that two of the parent representatives had only been at the school for a year. Two more were finishing their second year. In addition, several of the faculty had only been at the school for a year. Also, while the school had been discussing its identity, it had not been discussing leadership in the way it was framed in the study. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that this school, in part due to its smaller size, has been involved in a great deal of dialog about what it is, what it does, and how it does it.

*Characterization of Factor A*

The ranking of statements in Factor A is a combination of the ranking in the sorts of all the participants who loaded on that factor. Simply looking at the number of statements referencing each group of people involved in small school leadership reveals a clear breakdown. This breakdown falls along the lines of who is doing the leading, and within that grouping, what kinds of things are important to leadership, such as behaviors, attitudes and responsibilities. As shown in Illustration 5.1, the greatest emphasis in the two highest ranked groups of factor scores, +4 and +3 or +2 and +1, is on statements regarding teacher leadership. In the middle ranking group of factor scores of 0, the emphasis is on statements regarding teachers and the head of school. In the ranking group of -1 or -2 the emphasis is shared between students and parents. The lowest ranking group, -3 and -4, contains statements primarily regarding parent leadership. Student-focused statements do not have as reliable a trend, but do show a general increase in importance lower in the ranking groups. Illustrations 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate these descriptions.



*Illustration 5.1* Percentage of Statements within Ranking Groups by Classifications. The percentage is determined by taking the number of statements referring to a classification within each ranking group and dividing it by the total number of statements within that group. For instance, the total number of statements with a score of +4 or +3 is seven. The total number of statements referring to the classification of “teacher” is 6. The percentage of statements within that ranking group referring to teachers is 86%.



*Illustration 5.2* Percentage of Statements Referring to Each Classification by Ranking Group.

Percentage is determined in the same manner as in Illustration 5.1.

The rankings place teachers and staff at the forefront of leadership in effective smaller schools. Within the highest ranked statements that focus on teachers is an additional emphasis on collegiality and creating a collaborative atmosphere. The three highest ranked statements assert that teachers and staff should, “be dedicated to the learning of all students, be role models for the behaviors they expect from others, and be passionate about providing quality education.” Three of the next four assert that they should, “respect each other, take time to talk with each other about students and teaching, and collaborate to improve the educational program.” While it is no surprise that there is a focus on community within any smaller school, the weight given to teacher and staff responsibility for creating this community is very important. This seems to

place the responsibility of culture squarely on the shoulders of the faculty, not on the head of school as might be assumed in much of the thinking regarding school leadership.

The focus on statements regarding the head of school is greatest in the middle of the rankings. The first of these statements is that the head of school should be inspirational and the second is that he or she should clearly communicate the vision of the school. This is in sharp contrast to the type of statements occurring at the top of the rankings concerning faculty and staff. Instead of a responsibility to working together, the emphasis here is on providing more of the charismatic leadership spoken of in the Transformational Leadership model. The next responsibility of the head, according to these rankings, is to work with faculty and staff to develop and communicate the vision of the school and to provide opportunities for them to work together and take on leadership opportunities within the school. Again, the faculty and staff are key to the effectiveness of the school not only in terms of their ability to work together, but also in terms of their participation in leadership and setting the direction for the school. The head of school then supports them by providing support for their efforts and communicating the resulting shared vision. The final responsibility of the head of school is individual work with faculty and staff to challenge and coach them in their work. Again, it is important to remember that participants said that all of these statements were important, but there seems to be a fairly clear ranking of the head of school's responsibilities.

The highest ranked statement that refers to students is that they should be provided with leadership responsibilities as part of the school program. The next two statements about students concern actual leadership behaviors, "learning from each other" and "addressing emerging issues within the student body." Student-focused statements do not appear again until the second to last

ranking grouping. At that point they are concerned with a variety of aspects of student leadership, including “being role models” and “taking on leadership opportunities.” The lowest rated student statement is that “students should know and be committed to the vision of the school.” With students, too, it seems that there is a hierarchy of responsibilities. The first statement, though, is about the school community’s responsibility to the students, to provide them with leadership opportunities. After that, it seems that it is important that students are practicing leadership skills and behaviors and that at the last they are concerned with the greater issues of leadership of the school.

Parent-focused statements tend to fall toward the bottom of the rankings. The first of these statements to appear is in the middle group of the rankings and is that “parents should know and be committed to the vision of the school.” The next two are that parents “should be role models,” and that they “should support the decisions of the head of school.” The rest of the statements regarding parents are in the last ranking group, supporting the many statements by participants that, although they thought parents were important, they tended to put most of those statements at the end of their rankings because the other statements were simply more important to an effective smaller school.

Factor A turns out to be interesting not only because it was so strong in the number of significant loadings, but also because the resulting rankings reveal interesting ideas in terms of the groups represented within the school community and the behaviors, roles, and responsibilities that the participants feel are important to smaller school effectiveness. The ranking in Factor A seems to reveal that the participants have somewhat different ideas about the behaviors and roles

of each group in terms of effective leadership of the school. These ideas shall now be explored particularly in terms of the context of this school's culture.

#### *Faculty and Staff Leadership*

The ranking of statements in Factor A clearly indicates that the community believes that faculty and staff leadership is important for an effective small school. What is included in this idea of leadership is a balance between specific behaviors and overarching values. These values focus on providing a quality educational experience for all students. The behaviors address how the faculty should go about this endeavor and incorporate elements of collaboration. They include working together, talking to each other, respecting each other, and being role models in their own behavior. These are ranked highest in importance. Those statements ranked lowest in importance that focus on faculty are more concerned with more of the day-to-day decisions and work on curriculum and teaching methods.

Billings is a very small school that has always worked to reach each student. It is not a surprise that the community expects the faculty to hold student learning and quality education at the forefront of the school's development of curriculum and the continued honing of teaching practices.

#### *Head of School Leadership*

The first appearance of statements relating to the head of school in the rankings calls for the head to be inspirational. This is followed by the assertion that the head of school should clearly communicate the vision of the school. These two statements, which stand out in the ranking in Factor A, are very much in line with the ideas of the Transformational Leadership model. These statements are then followed by a combination of assorted responsibilities that

include providing opportunities and support for others to be leaders, questioning the status quo, and communicating with faculty and community regarding school vision. The ranking places the responsibility of the head of school to work with individual teachers to improve practice at the lowest levels of importance in terms of the head of school's leadership priorities.

The school has been going through several processes that may contribute to these opinions. Over the past several years, the school has been working to increase the awareness and reputation of the school through a major marketing effort. This effort has included the creation of a new logo, brochure, admissions information packet, and website. A great deal of reflection on and development of the identity of the school has gone into the process. The school has also completed a five-year strategic plan and is currently developing the next one. This has included the participation of the board, faculty, staff, and parents. Finally, the school engaged in and completed its self-study and visit to attain accreditation. This also included participation on the part of the entire community and took over a year to complete. Through all of this, though many people took on leadership roles in individual parts of the process, the head of school has been at the center. In addition, the lower ranking of statements regarding personal work with faculty members might be credited to the fact that there is a lead teacher who works with individual faculty. This is a possible explanation for why the school community sees the visionary and inspirational leadership of the head of school instead of his or her efforts at staff development as most important.

#### *Student Leadership*

Student leadership receives a very different treatment by the rankings in Factor A. The first statement, that students should be provided with leadership opportunities as part of the

school program' is more about the responsibilities of the faculty than it is about the students. The next statements refer to students practicing leadership or learning how to be leaders by addressing emerging issues among the student body and learning from each other. More advanced leadership practices such as taking opportunities to lead, influencing class curriculum, suspending assumptions, and contributing to the vision of the school appear lower in the rankings.

The middle-school setting for this study has a significant impact on these findings. First, the developmental level of middle-school students is a major consideration when thinking about student leadership within the school. Students in the early adolescent stage are beginning to define who they are in relation to the people and the world around them. These three years are a major transition from learning and knowing themselves to learning and knowing themselves in relationship, and this has a significant impact on the kinds and levels of leadership that they are able to practice. It is understandable that the faculty and parent participants in the study, as well as the students themselves, believe that a student's primary responsibility in terms of school leadership is to learn how to be a leader. Second, it is generally the middle school level where students are no longer in self-contained classrooms and are interacting much more with the whole class and whole school.

The top-ranked student statement was generated by the focus groups and not the literature, and so it comes directly out of this specific school community. It states that students should be provided with leadership opportunities as part of the *school program* as opposed to part of the *curriculum* or *classroom methods*. This is not to say that Billings does not have traditional student leadership roles such as student government representatives or use student

leadership models in class management. However, because Billings values student leadership so highly and because the size of the school easily facilitates taking advantage of unique situations, students often have the opportunity to practice leadership in ways that would be more difficult to offer in a larger school. For instance, when students became aware that a local grocery store was shutting its doors unexpectedly, they not only were able to investigate the impact it had on the surrounding community, but also organize a demonstration that brought media attention to the situation and its impact on the neighborhood. Another example is the group of students who, while investigating air particulates, discovered a connection with rain and phosphate levels in the nearby public park's lake. They were able to not only present their findings to Seattle City Council, but also to affect the city policy regarding the use of chemicals in the surrounding park. The school community, particularly the faculty, deeply values giving students the opportunity to practice leadership whenever possible. When adjustments need to be made in class schedules, teachers are more than willing to do what it takes to make it happen, and the size of the school makes this much easier both in terms of logistics as well as the shared commitment to providing students these opportunities.

### *Parent Leadership*

Two perspectives regarding parent involvement in the school can explain the ranking of parent-focused statements in Factor A. First, parent involvement in middle school tends to look very different from parent involvement in elementary school. It is important for middle-school parents to begin to give their child space to practice independence while providing support on which their child can rely for acknowledgement and assurance. This requires a significant shift for parents who had been accustomed to spending a great deal of time in their child's elementary

classroom. Second, as repeatedly stated in the interviews, parents are important, but do not need to be as influential or visible in the leadership of the school. While it is good to have parents on board and willing to help the school, their role is not to challenge curriculum decisions or to be concerned with the learning of all students in order for the school to function. These are both facets of the same idea, that parent participation is important to an effective small school, but it is their support rather than their leadership that is important.

The specific rankings of the parent-focused statements shed some light on what the participants think are the primary responsibilities of parents within the school. The highest ranked statement regarding parent leadership is that parents should know and be committed to the vision of the school. In private schools, this is considered to be a key component of the admissions process. The goal from the school's perspective, particularly at Billings, is not to find the "smartest" students, but to find the families that are the best fit with the school's culture and the school's ability to meet the student's educational needs. Parent understanding and support of the vision of the school is particularly important for obvious reasons. If the parents do not understand or support what the school is trying to do or how it is trying to do it, the school is setting itself up for a relationship with the family that will most likely be problematic for both parties.

The next two statements regarding parents address parent behaviors that also support the community as a whole. The first states that they should be role models for the behavior they expect from others, and the second that they should support the decisions of the head of school. The second of these statements tended to elicit comments from parent participants. They said that it was important for parents to support the head of school, but only if the head of school was

making good decisions, and that sometimes support included appropriately challenging the head when necessary (by talking to him or her directly) when said parent had a concern. They considered unquestioning support to be ultimately dangerous for the healthy functioning of an effective school.

All three of the lowest ranked statements in Factor A concerned parents. The first of these, that parents should learn from each other, seems to be ranked lowest due to the fact that parents are in more contact with the school and teachers than they are with each other and that the community of learning created by the school is primarily for the students and staff. This is not to say that parents shouldn't learn from each other, but that it is not as necessary to the effective functioning of a small school. The second statement, that parents should be dedicated to the learning of all students, often received the comment from participants that they ranked it low because parents should first be concerned with the learning of their own child. The third statement, that parents should have input into the educational program, was consistently ranked low by most participants, and some commented that if parents chose the school for their child, they should support the program that the school creates.

#### *Preliminary Model for Small School Leadership*

The intent of this study is to provide a spark for continued investigations of small school leadership and other keys to smaller school success. Consequently, the model presented here is by no means refined enough to use prescriptively. It is offered instead as a conceptualization of smaller school leadership against which educators and researchers can check their thinking, experience, and data.

Many participants commented at some point during their sort that all the statements are important to an effective small school. It was the most commonly shared opinion by the participants. The model uses that statement to look at not only what the participants rated as important overall, but also what they rated as important within each constituent group. For instance, the statements that referred to teachers, when pulled out from Factor A, show that participants think that teachers should be concerned primarily with leadership actions and behaviors that pertain either directly to the students and curriculum, or to their personal skills and relationships with others in the school. Heads of school, on the other hand, should be more concerned with the school community as a whole. Table 5.1 shows the ranking of statements by group, i.e. teachers and staff, head of school, students, and parents.

Table 5.1

*Statement Rankings by Group*

<u>Score</u>	<u>Statements regarding teachers and staff</u>
+4	18. Teachers and staff should be dedicated to the learning of all students. 22. Teachers and staff should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others. 25. Teachers and administration should be passionate about providing quality education.
+3	15. Teachers and staff should respect each other. 16. Teachers should take time to talk with each other about students and teaching. 24. Teachers should collaborate to improve the educational program.
+2	12. Teachers should have the power to make decisions about curriculum. 13. Teachers should continually work to improve their knowledge and skills about teaching. 19. Teachers and staff should know and be committed to the vision of the school. 28. Teachers and staff should be committed to working together.
+1	10. Teachers should explore the effectiveness of different teaching methods. 21. Teachers and staff should have input about major school decisions. 27. People should take responsibility for their own actions and hold others accountable for their actions.
0	11. Teachers and staff should have opportunities to lead projects and/or programs. 14. Teachers should take the lead in determining the methods and topics of instruction in the school. 17. Teachers and staff should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions. 23. Teachers and staff should question assumptions about how things should be done.
-1	20. Teachers and staff should support the decisions of the head of school. 26. Non-teaching staff should work with and get to know the students and parents.
<u>Score</u>	<u>Statements regarding the head of school</u>
+2	8. The head of school should be inspirational.
+1	7. The head of school should clearly communicate the vision of the school.
0	3. The head of school should provide support, time and resources for others to be leaders. 5. The head of school should communicate with the teachers about what is important to the school. 6. The head of school should include the community in developing and refining the vision of the school.
-1	1. The head of school should challenge teachers and staff to do better work. 2. The head of school should coach people to improve their work. 4. The head of school should help teachers work together.
<u>Score</u>	<u>Statements regarding students</u>
+3	40. Students should be provided with leadership opportunities as a part of the educational experience.
+1	39. Students should be involved in addressing emerging issues in the student body.

	41. Students should learn from each other.
-1	42. Students should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others.
-2	38. Students should take opportunities to lead when offered.
	43. Students should have input and influence on class curriculum.
	44. Students should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions.
-3	45. Students should know and be committed to the vision of the school.
<u>Score</u>	<u>Statements regarding parents</u>
0	31. Parents should know and be committed to the vision of the school.
-2	32. Parents should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others.
	34. Parents should support the decisions of the head of school.
-3	30. Parents should continually work to improve their own knowledge and skills about parenting.
	33. Parents should have opportunities to lead projects and/or programs.
	35. Parents should suspend their assumptions and talk to each other to explore ideas and questions.
-4	29. Parents should learn from each other.
	36. Parents should be dedicated to the learning of all students.
	37. Parents should have input into the educational program.

As stated in the methodology chapter, this study did not categorize the statements before the sorting process in order to allow categories, if they existed, to be revealed in the data. The rankings by group suggest a categorization of the statements by the focus of the statements. There are three main foci: (a) students and curricular program, (b) school community, and (c) personal traits and relationships.

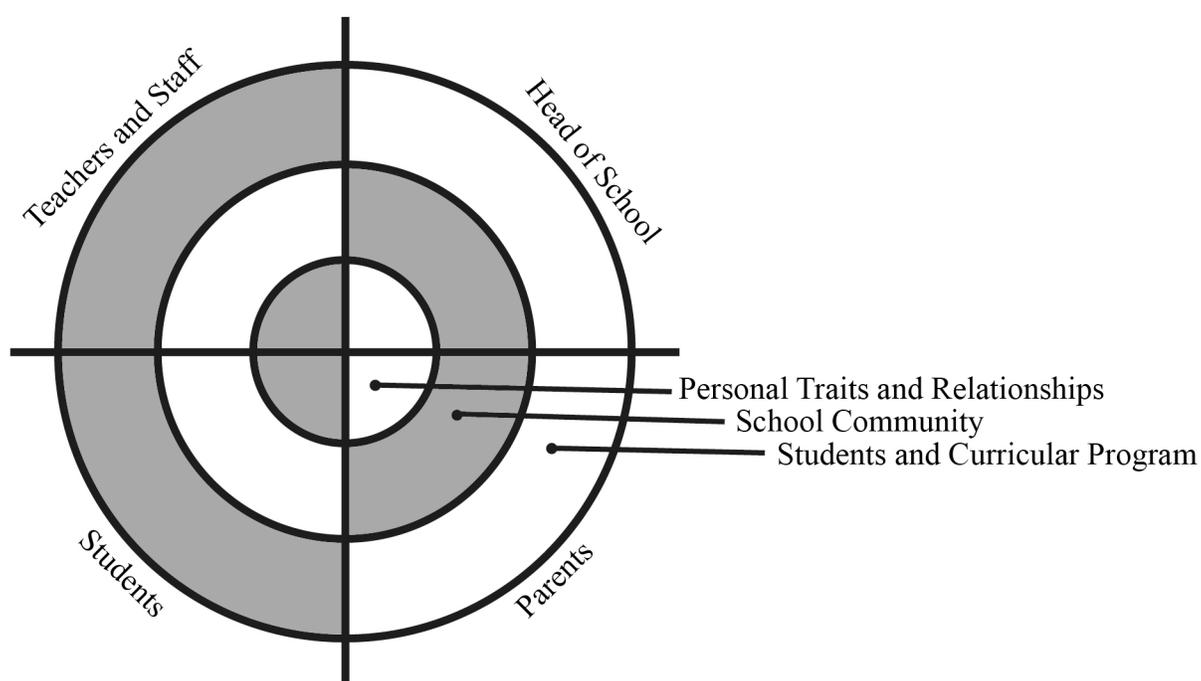
The statements that focus on students and curricular program require the group in question (teachers, head of school, students, or parents) to attend either to specific needs of students or of the school's educational program. For example, two of the three highest rated statements regarding teachers and staff are (a) teachers and staff should be dedicated to the learning of all students, and (b) teachers and administration should be passionate about providing quality education. The top rated statement regarding students asserts that students should be provided with leadership opportunities as a part of the educational experience.

The statements that focus on school community look at elements such as creating and communicating vision, and contributing to the leadership of the school as a whole. For example, the highest rated parent statement says that parents should know and be committed to the vision of the school. The two highest rated head of school statements are (a) the head of school should be inspirational and (b) the head of school should clearly communicate the vision of the school.

The statements that focus on personal traits and relationships include building one's own leadership abilities and developing relationships, particularly within one's own group, that support both personal leadership and the well being of the school as a whole. For example, the third of the top three rated statements for teachers and staff says that teachers and staff should be role models for the behaviors they expect from others. This speaks not only to the individual teacher's own leadership abilities, but helps build their credibility in the eyes of others, strengthening their relationships. Other examples are the second highest ranked statements for students, that (a) students should be involved in addressing emerging issues in the student body, and (b) students should learn from each other. The first can be categorized both as a statement focused on students and curricular program as well as on personal traits and relationships.

By looking at the statements as belonging to one or more of these three groups, a pattern emerges. While not every statement falls neatly into one pile or the other, it is clear that according to the rankings of Factor A, there is an agreed-upon priority or priorities for each group. For teachers, staff, and students, the priorities for what they should be doing in terms of leadership center around students and curriculum, and on personal traits and relationships. The priority for the head of school and for parents is the school community. This is not to say that these groups should not focus on the other categories, simply that the ranking indicates that these

are most important for an effective smaller school setting. A graphical representation is depicted in Illustration 5.3.



*Illustration 5.3* Visual representation of small school leadership model. The shaded areas indicate the priorities in terms of leadership traits and behaviors for each demographic group in the school.

In the construction of the instrument, the statements were phrased as what members of each group should do in terms of leadership for an effective smaller school. This was intentional in order to help participants think not only about what this particular school does well, but what any smaller school should do in terms of leadership. Based on the rankings in Factor A, this model illustrates the priorities for smaller school leadership for each of the demographic groups

within the school. As Table 5.1 and Illustration 5.3 demonstrate, the priorities for teachers, staff, and students are the students, curricular programs, personal abilities in terms of leadership, and the relationships within the school community. The priority for the head of school and the parents is the support and development of the school community as a whole.

The first priority for teachers should be, of course, to educate students. The priorities stated in this model are in terms of educational leadership. However, the education of students and the priorities indicated in this model are not only compatible, they are strongly linked. Teacher leadership relies on a collegial environment where professional relationships are based on trust and respect, and are concentrated on developing and improving teaching and learning. The educational program cannot be improved if the faculty is not focused on continually assessing the needs of students and their responses to various methods and curricula. What makes this model interesting, though, is that the responsibility for the quality of education overall at a small school, not just what occurs in individual classrooms, is placed on the shoulders of the faculty and staff as a whole.

The highest ranked statement for students is not about what the students should do, but what should be done for students, namely that they should be provided with leadership opportunities as part of the educational program. It is the only statement in the passive voice and should be changed in future studies (see *Recommendations for Further Study*). That aside, the other statements regarding student leadership traits and behaviors echo those of the teacher group. The rankings of student statements give priority to the two statements that are related to providing students with leadership opportunities within the school program. The first statement, that students should be involved in addressing student issues, places the responsibility for

creating a collegial student environment on the shoulders of the students in much the same way that the teacher responsibilities are so defined. The second statement, that students should learn from each other, echoes this recognition of a collegial student environment. Both of these also require a focus on student learning and a curriculum that supports this type of student learning.

The priority for the head of school as shown in Factor A is clearly to set and communicate the vision of the school. It is interesting to note that the rankings place the responsibility for the professional development of the faculty and staff much more with the faculty and staff themselves than with the head of school. Again, the participants agreed that all the statements were important, indicating that the head of school does have a role in maintaining the professionalism of the staff.

The priority of parents, as indicated by the findings, should be the school community as a whole. After they have accepted the school and its program for the education of their child, their role is to support and maintain the culture of which they have chosen to be a part. Being committed to the school's vision, being role models for behavior they would like to see in others, and supporting the decisions of the head of school (providing that they are in keeping with the school's vision) are the most important leadership activities that parents can perform for an effective small school. Factor A also places parent statements that show a more direct relationship between parents and the school higher than statements that emphasize parent relationships with each other. This is in contrast to teacher and student statements that emphasize a collegial teaching and learning environment.

The simplicity of this preliminary model affords two advantages. First, it reveals that the two groups that appeared first in the rankings in Factor A, teachers and students, have similar

priorities in terms of their leadership in an effective small school. Likewise, the two other groups, heads of school and parents, share similar sets of priorities. Second, it allows for a building of a more complex model. Future studies could expand the areas of focus, balance the number of statements for each area and confirm or alter the findings of this study, and explore the makeup of the groups by breaking them down into sub-groups or determining if these are adequate for understanding leadership in small schools. This will be explored in the *Recommendations for Further Study* section.

To further explore the smaller school leadership model it is useful to compare it to the two models of leadership under which this study was framed, Transformational Leadership and leadership capacity. Both of these models contain strong similarities to the model suggested by the data in this study, and there are also a few key differences. The comparison of the smaller school leadership model to these two models not only helps to further define it, it also informs the discussions of the limitations of this study and the recommendations for further study.

#### *Relationship of Smaller School Leadership Model to The Transformational Leadership Model*

Northouse's basic definition of Transformational Leadership offers two key concepts of leadership and teacher development. "Transformational leadership involves assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. It is a process that subsumes charismatic and visionary leadership" (2001, p. 131). Framing the first concept in terms of school leadership, a transformational head of school gives attention to teachers and works to ensure that their growth as teachers is personally satisfying. The second concept suggests that heads of school must inspire and connect teachers with the vision of the school. Both of these have strong parallels in the smaller school leadership model.

Both models emphasize professional growth and learning. Transformational Leadership deems this necessary for personal satisfaction with work as well as necessary for the overall health of the organization. Factor A also values professional growth. The difference lies in who is believed to be responsible for leading that growth. In Transformational Leadership, it is the head of school who ensures that the teachers are challenged and are professionally fulfilled in their work. According to the ranking of the statements, Factor A seems to place more of that responsibility on the teachers themselves and on the collegial community.

This raises the question of who initially builds that community, the teachers or the head of school? The answer is probably different for each school, depending upon such factors as when the head was hired to who is on the faculty and the levels of experience and ability they hold. However, the smaller school leadership model supposes an established school and culture, and the transformational model seems to suppose the ongoing actions of the leader. If both are intended to define established organizations, then the key difference is that in the smaller school model the teachers collectively are responsible for the collegiality that supports each individual's professional growth and development. Transformational Leadership, while working to create leaders among the staff, is still a relatively top-down model.

#### *Relationship of Smaller School Leadership Model to The Leadership Capacity Model*

The leadership capacity model takes a much more teacher-centric stance. Lambert describes teacher leaders as “those whose dreams of making a difference have either been kept alive or have been reawakened by engaging with colleagues and working within a professional culture” (2003, p. 33). This echoes the smaller school model where the primary leadership activities for teachers have to do with increasing their professional capacity, creating a collegial

environment, and focusing on students and the curriculum. The leadership capacity model, like Transformational Leadership, tends to put a significant amount of the responsibility for at least initially building the collegial culture on the head of school. However, like the smaller school model, the head must first establish and communicate the vision of the school in order for an effective culture to develop.

The leadership capacity model also understands that leading and teaching are connected and that when focusing on students, leadership should be part of the curricular program. Lambert states that “student leadership emerges from democratic classrooms and schools in which student voices are invited and heard” (2003, p. 56). Like the smaller school model that highly values the statement that students should be provided with leadership opportunities as part of the curriculum, the leadership capacity model understands that student leadership is part of the system of leadership in an effective school.

While both models include parent participation as an important aspect of an effective school, the leadership capacity model suggests giving them more power than the participants in the study indicated was necessary. Lambert (2003) argues that the level of parent leadership as defined by Factor A is not full parent leadership as defined by her model. The leadership capacity model challenges schools to see parents as full partners in developing the school program with all the rights and responsibilities thereof. The participants in the study often commented on the statements that parents should be concerned with the learning of all students and that parents should have input into the school curriculum. If they disagreed with any statements in the sort, it was one or both of these. In disagreeing, participants stated that parents should be more concerned with the learning of their own children and that they could question

teachers about curriculum, but should leave the development of the curricular program to the school.

### *Limitations of the Study*

This study is one of the first to specifically examine leadership in a smaller school setting. As such, it has several limitations, particularly in scope and, consequently, in applicability. The cultures of the various communities of which it is a part, such as the northwest, Seattle, private school, etc., most likely color the perceptions and opinions of the participants. Additionally, the researcher's unique closeness to the school and its community could be viewed as a double-edged sword. And, the fact that the study took place at a single small school is an obvious limitation. These elements are all important to explore to help put the study into context.

The communities that overlap around Billings play a part both in how it operates and how it sees itself. Due in great part to where it is and what it does, Billings embraces a pioneering experimental spirit and a sense of environmental stewardship. At first glance, this may not seem to contribute to the limitations of the study. However, because of this Billings as an institution already leans towards the sense of community awareness and interconnectedness highlighted in the findings. Other schools in other communities may not have these natural inclinations and may not be able to connect with or find themselves in these findings. In fact, they might come up with a very different set of statements and thus a very different model of effective small school leadership.

The intimacy between the researcher and the school can be seen both as an advantage and as a limitation. The community knows and trusts the researcher. The researcher is familiar with the organization and the language it uses to describe itself. The researcher is familiar with the

history of the school and with many of the participants. This familiarity aids the researcher in understanding and interpreting the findings. However, this familiarity may also allow the researcher to give more weight to some perspectives or ideas than they might warrant.

That the study took place at a single school may have limited the generation of the statements as well as the responses. While the strong consensus around Factor A was unexpected, it was not unbelievable given the closeness of the community and the strength of the shared vision. As such, it is almost like a case study and thus, while others might be able to draw parallels to their own situations, one cannot simply say that this is the model by which smaller schools should operate. However, the design of the study did ask participants to think about what is important for effective small schools in general, and not specifically in regards to Billings. While this does not necessarily expand the applicability of this study to other smaller schools at this point, it does allow this study to be used as a foundation for further development of a smaller school leadership model.

In short, this study offers a model of smaller school leadership that is simple and clear. The people who are most important in smaller school leadership are the teachers, and they should be focusing on the students, school program, and their own personal leadership abilities and relationships. The students, as well, should be focused on the school program and on their own leadership abilities and relationships. The head of school, then, is responsible primarily for the school community as a whole and in creating and communicating vision. The parents, too, though they do not have as central a role in daily school life, are responsible for leadership in terms of the whole school community. However, the refrain that the participants nearly unanimously stated, that all the statements were important, reinforces the idea that smaller school

leadership is truly a joint effort and that everyone is a vital contributor to an effective smaller school.

*Recommendations for Further Study*

Clearly this is just part of what is needed in order to understand the leadership that will help realize the best of what smaller school models have to offer. The advantages for students and faculty, such as higher achievement, lower dropout rates, less disciplinary problems, and greater professional satisfaction, are far too exciting to be ignored. It is also important to recognize the differences and to separate the studies between smaller schools and SWAS. It is neither appropriate nor effective for the further development of either model to treat them as similar. Aside from these general recommendations, there are some specific recommendations for further study of this particular topic and for using this method.

First, the study should be expanded. To completely develop the model for smaller school leadership, other schools, both public and private as well as elementary, middle, and high schools, should be included. In order to determine if there is a difference between large school and smaller school leadership, larger schools in these categories should also be added to the sample. It would also add to the strength of the findings if schools that represented these categories were sampled from a variety of locations and communities.

The concourse from which the statements are developed should also be explored and possibly expanded. While the literature was mined for perspectives and ideas about leadership in general and about school leadership in particular, the school community focus groups that offered additional information were confined to the Billings community. Including larger schools, public schools, elementary and high schools, and schools from other areas and

communities in further studies should also entail conducting several more focus groups to ensure the widest range of perspectives is represented.

The results of these data in terms of the categorization of the statements can also be used to further refine the study. The categories represented in the final suggested smaller school leadership model are not represented equally in terms of numbers of statements. Further refinement of the instrument could include a move from an unstructured sort, where statements are included without regard to any sort of categorization, to a structured sort. As briefly defined in the methods section, a structured sort is one in which there is an equal number of statements per category. This helps ensure that any prevalent philosophy represented by the factor sort(s) is not skewed due to that philosophy simply having more statements to represent it. In this case that would mean having an equal number of statements that refer to students, faculty, parents, and heads of school, and addressing leadership traits and behaviors regarding self and relationships, school community and students, and curriculum.

APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Adult Participant Informed Consent Form

Leadership in Small Schools

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Charis Sharp, a doctoral candidate in the Leadership and Organizational Change program at Antioch University, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

This research involves the study of perceptions of the process of effective leadership as experienced by members of a small school community. I wish to conduct this study with faculty, staff, board members, and a sample of parents and students of Billings Middle School.

The study involves, at a minimum, one conversational interview which will be arranged at your convenience and which is expected to last about 1 hour. The interview will be taped. During the interview you will be asked to rank a number of statements about effective small schools. Your rankings and some demographic data will be recorded.

Your name, individual responses, data, and comments will be kept confidential. In addition, the recordings and all related research materials including the Informed Consent Forms will be kept in a secure file cabinet and destroyed after the completion of my study. The results from these interviews will be incorporated into my doctoral dissertation.

I hope that through this interview you may develop a greater personal awareness of your own experience as a result of your participation in this research. The risks to you are considered minimal. You can withdraw from the study at any time. Should you withdraw, your data will be eliminated from the study.

There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study.

If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please contact

Carolyn Kenny, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board  
 Tel: 805-565-7535 e-mail: ckenny@phd.antioch.edu  
 Ph.D. in Leadership & Change  
 150 E. South College  
 Yellow Springs, OH 45387

Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating that you have read, understood and agreed to participate in this research. Return one to me and keep the other for yourself.

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Name of researcher (please print)

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Date

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Signature of researcher

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Name of participant (please print)

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Date

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Signature of participant

## Appendix B: Parent of Child Participant Informed Consent Form

Leadership in Small Schools

Your child, \_\_\_\_\_, has been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Charis Sharp, a doctoral candidate in the Leadership and Organizational Change program at Antioch University, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

This research involves the study of perceptions of the process of effective leadership as experienced by members of a small school community. I wish to conduct this study with faculty, staff, board members, and a sample of parents and a sample of students of Billings Middle School.

The study involves, at a minimum, one conversational interview which will be arranged at your child's convenience during the school lunch hour and which is expected to last about 1 hour. The interview will be taped. During the interview your child will be asked to rank a number of statements about effective small schools. His or her rankings and some demographic data will be recorded.

Your child's name, individual responses, data, and comments will be kept confidential. In addition, the recordings and all related research materials including the Informed Consent Forms will be kept in a secure file cabinet and destroyed after the completion of my study. The results from these interviews will be incorporated into my doctoral dissertation.

The risks to your child are considered minimal. You can withdraw your child from the study at any time. Should you withdraw your child, his or her data will be eliminated from the study.

There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study.

If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please contact:

Carolyn Kenny, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board  
 Tel: 805-565-7535 e-mail: ckenny@phd.antioch.edu  
 Antioch University  
 Ph.D. in Leadership & Change  
 150 E. South College  
 Yellow Springs, OH 45387

Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating that you have read, understood and agreed to participate in this research. Return one to me and keep the other for yourself.

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Name of researcher (please print)

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Date

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Signature of researcher

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Name of parent (please print)

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Date

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Signature of parent

## Appendix C: Student Participant Informed Consent Form

Leadership in Small Schools

In this project we will be interviewing you so that we can learn more about what you think is important for a small school to work well. Your participation is completely voluntary.

As you know, it is very important that you understand what you will be doing in this research project, that you have discussed the project with your parents and/or teachers, and that you ask questions about our project if anything seems confusing or unclear to you. Is it also very important to the researcher, Charis Sharp, and Billings Middle School that this research benefits you and the school community. I hope to learn something that will help support and improve the work of people in small schools. And I hope to share the knowledge with other educators and people in small schools. In order to share, I will be writing a dissertation and perhaps writing and publishing material from this dissertation report.

This form is given to you to make sure that you understand this project and your participation in the project. Your name, information, responses and comments will remain confidential. Confidential means that your name and information will not appear in the report or shared with any other person. Please discuss this with your parents and/or teachers. They will be able to help you with the decision and sign for the choice you make.

**PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND SIGN IN THE PRESENCE OF YOUR PARENTS AND/OR TEACHERS.**

I have read this form and discussed the project with my parents and/or teachers and I understand everything about my participation in this research project.  
Sign both copies and keep one for your records.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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